Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

BACK TO GODHEAD

The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement
May/June 2012 • $4.50

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Las Vegas: Kṛṣṇa's New Playground

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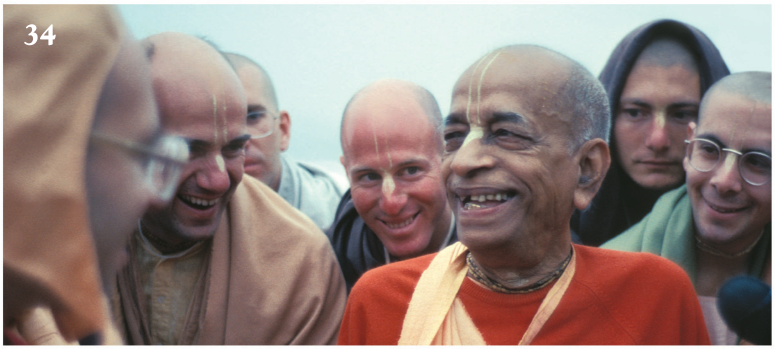

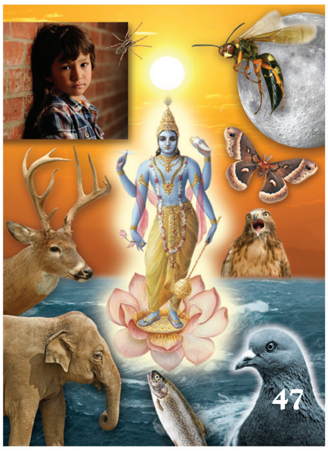

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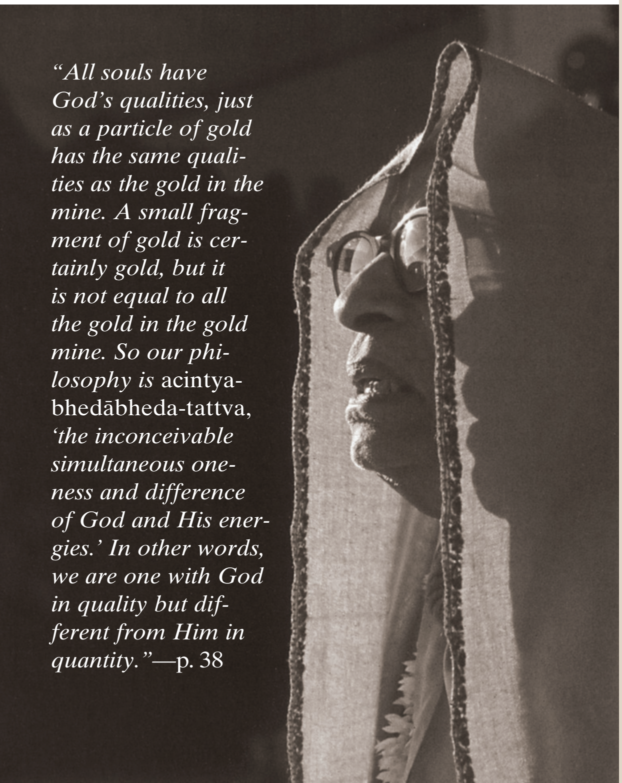
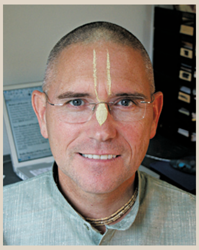
COVER Surapāla Dāsa and Kṛṣṇa-māyī Devī Dāsī chant Hare Kṛṣṇa near the world-famous Las Vegas strip, not far from their Kṛṣṇa temple on Dean Martin Drive. Please see the article beginning on page 21. (Photo by Christian Salas.)



"All souls have God's qualities, just as a particle of gold has the same qualities as the gold in the mine. A small fragment of gold is certainly gold, but it is not equal to all the gold in the gold mine. So our philosophy is acintya-bhedābheda-tattva, *'the inconceivable simultaneous oneness and difference of God and His energies.' In other words, we are one with God in quality but different from Him in quantity."*—p. 38

WELCOME

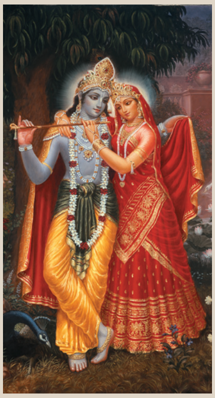


Surapāla Dāsa, from Poland, wanted urgently to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but when he and his wife, Kṛṣṇa-māyī Devī Dāsī, moved to America, they had no idea they'd end up starting a temple in the spiritually challenging atmosphere of Las Vegas. Kṛṣṇa blessed their endeavor, however, and you can read about the progress they've made in "Kṛṣṇa's New Playground." Lisa Chastain, one of the beneficiaries of their efforts, tells her story in "I Found Kṛṣṇa in Las Vegas."

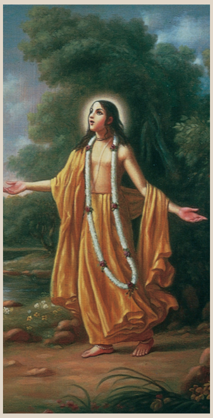
This issue also celebrates a milestone for *Back to Godhead* magazine: Ten years ago some of our staff members launched the website Krishna.com. Now run from the BTG offices by second-generation Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees, it has become an online destination for millions of devotees and anyone else who wants to learn more about Kṛṣṇa.

In the last issue, Satyarāja Dāsa introduced us to the first five of the twenty-four gurus mentioned in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. This time he writes about the other nineteen in "A World of Gurus." Viśākhā Devī Dāsī tells us about "The Magic of Hearing About Kṛṣṇa and His Devotees," and Navīna Śyāma Dāsa discusses the three *guṇas,* or modes of material nature, the cosmic forces that influence everything we do.

Hare Kṛṣṇa.—*Nāgarāja Dāsa, Editor*



Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are together the one Supreme Absolute Truth.



Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the combined incarnation of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, inaugurated the chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa five hundred years ago.

OUR PURPOSES

- To help all people discern reality from illusion, spirit from matter, the eternal from the temporary.
- To expose the faults of materialism.
- To offer guidance in the Vedic techniques of spiritual life.
- To preserve and spread the Vedic culture.
- To celebrate the chanting of the holy names of God as taught by Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
- To help every living being remember and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Personality of Godhead.

His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, Founder-Ācārya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

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The Magazine of the
Hare Krishna Movement

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Letters

Yamunā Devī's Govinda Prayers

We received the latest BTG (March/April) yesterday and just wanted to share our appreciation for a most wonderful issue.

I was wondering why there was no mention of Yamunā Devī being the one who is singing the Govinda Prayers that we hear during greeting the deities every morning in our temples, along with the story of how that came to be. I'm thinking that perhaps many devotees have never put a face with the voice.

Also, on a historical note, you mentioned in your "Welcome" that Yamunā Devī was part of the three couples who opened the first temple outside of North America. But it was actually my husband, Śivānanda Prabhu, who went first to Germany (alone) and opened a temple shortly before they did. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Madana-mohana Mohinī Dāsī
Sandy Ridge, North Carolina

Our reply: We couldn't find an account of how the Govinda Prayers ended up being played in all ISKCON temples. But we found this recollection of how Śrīla Prabhupāda responded to hearing the Govinda Prayers in the Los Angeles temple for the first time:

"Danavir Goswami: It wasn't too long after I joined that the Govinda Prayers started to be played in the morning. The album had come from England, that *Radha Krishna Temple* album. Just one morning it happened. It seemed quite spontaneous that the deity doors opened up and the Govinda Prayers went on, and Prabhupāda went through his normal offering his *daṇḍavats* in front of each altar. But when he went around and he sat on the *vyāsāsana,* tears were coming down his face. He was so pleased by the Govinda Prayers, and he wasn't able to speak for some time." (*Following Śrīla Prabhupāda: Remembrances,* DVD 2)

From this it appears that the Los Angeles temple authorities decided to play that song from the album, Prabhupāda approved, and the practice spread around ISKCON and became standard.

Yamunā Devī on the Cover

I just wanted to make a brief statement about your article on Yamunā Devī in the last issue. While I thought the article itself was very nicely presented, I felt that the magazine should have made the effort to dedicate a more emboldened headline on the cover, rather than a small insert tucked away in the corner. I think we can all agree that Yamunā Devī's achievements in her devotional service are monumental at the least.

I only met her once, in an encounter at the grand opening of the new temple in Seattle some years back, and we spoke briefly with each other. Still, when I heard of her passing I felt a great sadness within, as if I had lost someone very close to me. How that can be possible can only be understood in terms of devotional service. I never met Śrīla Prabhupāda, as he left this world the same year I joined ISKCON. But I can imagine how Prabhupāda's disciples must have felt great pain and separation at his passing, because of my own sadness from feeling the loss of his beloved disciple, whom I never really knew but had a moment's association with.

Balabhadra Dāsa
Boise, Idaho

ISKCON and the Vedas

Why don't we ISKCON devotees study the *Vedas* as a book. Instead we study "Vedic" literatures such as the *Gītā, Bhāga-*

vatam, etc? Do the *Vedas* contain flaws?

Aryan Kash
Via the Internet

Our reply: ISKCON devotees are followers of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and He emphasized the unique authority of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* In the *Tattva-sandarbha,* Caitanya Mahāprabhu's follower Jīva Gosvāmī, one of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vrindavan, discusses why the *Bhāgavatam* is our primary evidence. His agrument is fairly extensive, but the gist of it is this: For various reasons, the *Vedas* are extremely difficult to understand in our age, but they can be understood through the *Purāṇas,* and the purest and most authoritative *Purāṇa* is the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa,* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

The Bhaktivedant Book Trust (BBT) will soon publish the *Tattva Sandarbha,* the first of Jīva Gosvāmī's six *sandarbhas,* or treatises. The BBT edition will include a commentary by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa based on the eighteenth-century commentary of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa. Jīva Gosvāmī establishes the supremecy of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and then uses it as the authority for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy (ISKCON's philosophy), which he explains in the other *sandarbhas.*

The Brain and the Soul

Scientists say that our consciousness comes from the brain and brain damage causes personality change. Is it really that the *ātmān* operates through the brain and that's why it appears we are the brain?

John
Via the Internet

Our reply: Regarding the scientists' understanding of the brain and its function, one cannot deny that scientific and practical experience shows that injury to the brain often results in impairment of reasoning ability and even motor function of the body. What the scientific community neglects to recognize is the higher function of the spiritual intelligence and the self. Lord Kṛṣṇa explains in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that the living entity (*ātmān*) is situated within the material body, which functions just like a machine, made of the material energy. So if the machine is damaged, there will naturally be some impediment to its proper function. However, such damage to the body does not affect the spirit soul. ◆

Replies were written by Krishna.com Live Help volunteers. Please write to us at: BTG, P. O. Box 430, Alachua, Florida 32616, USA. Email: editors@krishna.com.

CORRECTION: The caption for a photo on page 55 of the last issue mistakenly said that the person with Yamunā Devī was Tulasi Harrison. It was actually Tulasi's sister, Jahnavi. We apologize for the error.

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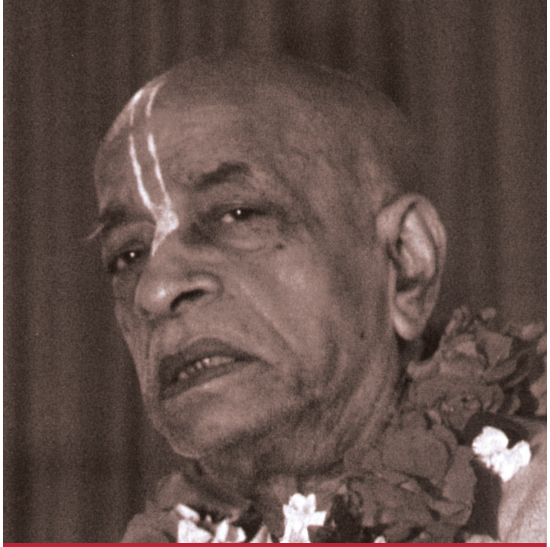
About Maya
Krishna's illusory energy: how we generally don't see things as they really are.

- What is the purpose of life?
- Are we "bodi ouls?"
- How does rei n work?
- Is there a Go
- Why is life so metimes?

The PERSONAL & IMP
Features of the Absolute Truth

ERSONAL

The sun and the sunshine provide an example to help us understand God and His energies.



FOUNDER'S LECTURE

New York City—July 17, 1976

By His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
Prabhupāda

Founder-*Ācārya* of the International
Society for Krishna Consciousness

---

eka-deśa-sthitasyāgner
jyotsnā vistāriṇī yathā
parasya brahmaṇaḥ śaktis
tathedam akhilaṁ jagat

"Just as the illumination of a fire situated in one place is spread all over, the energies of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Parabrahman, are spread all over this universe."
—*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā* 20.110
(quoted from *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.22.53)

LORD KṚṢNA SAYS in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.1): "I instructed this imperishable science of yoga to the sun god." The present sun god, the predominating deity of the sun, is named Vivasvān, and his son is Vaivasvata Manu. We are passing through the age of Vaivasvata Manu.

Kṛṣṇa is a person, and Vivasvān, the sun god, is also a person. Otherwise how could Kṛṣṇa speak to him? Kṛṣṇa instructed Vivasvān just as He instructed Arjuna, person to person. The predominating deity in the sun is a person, and there are many other persons

---

The unlimited spiritual effulgence known as the brahma-jyoti *originates from Lord Kṛṣṇa in His eternal abode.*

Background: © Roman Okopny | istockphoto.com. Center art: Dhruva Mahārāja Dāsa.

there. Like the sun god, their bodies are made of fire, so they can stay in the fire. The sun is very, very big, fourteen hundred thousand times bigger than this earth, and it is congested with population. Because they are all fiery and everything there is fiery, the sun's illumination spreads all over the universe.

The so-called scientists cannot understand this. It is beyond their conception. But this is a fact. And the moon is also fiery, like the sun, and its illumination is distributed. But the difference is that a cool atmosphere surrounds the moon's fire. Because the heat is coming through a cool atmosphere, the moon's rays are pleasing at night.

You have to see according to your capacity. You cannot see the Supreme Personality of Godhead with your present eyes. That is not possible.

The sun's illumination is hot, and the moon's illumination is cool, very soothing. Kṛṣṇa is so kind that both things are there, and both things are required. Kṛṣṇa says, "I am the light of the sun and the moon." (*Bhagavad-gītā* 7.8) Foolish persons challenge, "Can you show me God?" But why don't you see God here? Do you not see the sunshine, the moonshine? Why do you say, "I do not see God"? What is this argument? If Kṛṣṇa, God, says, "Here I am. I am the moonshine, I am the sunshine," why don't you see Him?

You have to see according to your capacity. You cannot see the Supreme Personality of Godhead with your present eyes. That is not possible. See the illumination of God.

For example, everyone knows sunshine, but not everyone is aware of the temperature of the sun or the person within the sun. It is a fact that there is a person within the sun. Otherwise, Kṛṣṇa would be lying when He says, "I spoke this philosophy to the sun god." So the sun god is there; that's a fact. And if the sun god is there, his associates are also there.

We have information that all the planets are full of living entities. The word in the Vedic literature is *janākīrṇa,* "congested with living entities." We see that New York City is congested with so many living entities. But if you go higher, then you cannot appreciate that New York City is so congested. Similarly, we have no knowledge of these planets, but each of the millions and trillions of planets is congested, full of living entities. This is Vedic information. It is not imperfect imagination. No. It is fact.

Everything Has Its Necessity

We learn from the *śāstra* (scriptures) that vegetation is flourishing on every planet because of the illumination of the moon. Here we see the effect of the moon on the waves of the seas and oceans.

Everything has its necessity and is acting as potency, or *śakti,* of the Supreme Lord. Everything is *śakti,* not *śaktimān. Śaktimān* means one who possesses the potency. That is God. We are all *śaktis.*

Caitanya Mahāprabhu is going to explain the three chief potencies of the Lord: the spiritual potency, the material potency, and the marginal potency. He will explain how God's potencies are acting throughout the cosmic manifestation and beyond. His potencies emanate from Him as light from a source. We see here in this room a light bulb, localized in one place, but its illumination is spread throughout the room. We can take advantage of the illumination. And we see practically how by the sun's illumination trees are growing colorful leaves. Everything is due to the sunshine. Where there is no sunshine, especially in these countries, all the leaves fall down, and as soon as there is sunshine, immediately millions and trillions of leaves come out.

In this way at least you have to understand how Kṛṣṇa's potency is working, just as the sunshine, the potency of the sun, is acting wonderfully. Everything—the flowers, the leaves—is perfectly done. The nondevotees will say it is happening automatically. No. God's potency is working perfectly so nature appears to be automatic. You'll find potencies acting everywhere. You shave your head, and the next day hair has come again. You do not know how this is happening.

Like the sunshine and the moonshine, the potencies of the Supreme Lord are working everywhere. They are different potencies of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, situated in their own place, and they are influencing the creation.

Similarly, although Kṛṣṇa is in Goloka Vṛndāvana playing with His cowherd boyfriends, the *gopīs,* His father and mother, still He's expanded all over the creation. That is Kṛṣṇa. For example, we live in some apartment. Now we are here, so we are absent from that apartment. God is not like that. God is in His apartment, and at the same time He is present everywhere in the universe.

God is unlimited. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.11):

avajānanti māṁ mūḍhā
mānuṣīṁ tanum āśritam
paraṁ bhāvam ajānanto
mama bhūta-maheśvaram

"Fools deride Me when I descend in the human form. They do not know My transcendental nature as the Supreme Lord of all that be." Kṛṣṇa appears like a human being with two hands and two legs. But the rascals do not understand the quality of these two hands and two legs. They think He has two hands and two legs like us; therefore they are called *mūḍha,* fools. And God does not have only two hands; He has many millions and trillions of hands and legs all over the universe. That is Kṛṣṇa.

The Result of Understanding Kṛṣṇa

Don't take Kṛṣṇa as an ordinary human being. If you do you'll be regarded as one of the rascals. Don't be a rascal; be intelligent and understand Kṛṣṇa. And if you understand Kṛṣṇa, then you become liberated immediately. Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.9),

janma karma ca me divyam
evaṁ yo vetti tattvataḥ
tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma
naiti mām eti so 'rjuna

"One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna." That is the qualification. As soon as you understand Kṛṣṇa—not thoroughly, but at least partially understand His nature—then immediately you become liberated. We cannot become perfect in this material world, but to some extent if we become perfect, then our life becomes successful.

Kṛṣṇa's energy, expanding from Him, is impersonal. But Kṛṣṇa is not impersonal. Foolish people do not understand Him. We see daily that the sunshine is so expansive, all over the universe, but the source of the sunshine is the sun globe. So which is more important, the sunshine or the sun globe? That we can see practically. And which is more important, the sun globe or the sun god? Similarly, God the person is more important than His energy.

You can study Kṛṣṇa's position by understanding the example of the sun. The sunshine is a combination of illuminating molecules, each of them a particle. Not that it is homogeneous. Every atomic particle is distinct. Similarly, living entities are small particles in the impersonal Brahman effulgence. The *śāstra* describes the size of the living entities as being one ten-thousandth of the tip of a hair, such a small particle. They are congested in what is called the Brahman effulgence.

If you want to merge into the Brahman effulgence, that is not difficult, because you are a small particle of spiritual identity. If you don't want your individuality, you can stay in the Brahman effulgence. But what is the profit? There is no profit. Suppose you are placed in the sky, in the sunshine, and somebody says, "Now remain in the sky," will you agree? Will anyone agree—"Let me remain in the sky as a small particle of the sunshine"? No. You can agree out of some sentiment, but you cannot stay there. That is not possible.

Falling from Brahman

Therefore, those who merge into the existence of impersonal Brahman fall down. For example, astronauts are going on moon excursions, but they cannot stay there. Simply rotating in the sky is not very pleasant. We have experience on airplanes. If we go five or six hours in the airplane, we become suffocated. It is not possible to stay there for a long time.

Therefore those who merge into the Brahman effulgence fall down, because they have no engagement in Kṛṣṇa's business. They have never cultivated knowledge of service to Kṛṣṇa. The Māyāvādīs, the impersonalists, think, "What is this nonsense, serving Kṛṣṇa? Kṛṣṇa is *māyā,* illusion. We are not going to serve *māyā.* We are going to become one with God, one with the effulgence." But because they have no information about serving Kṛṣṇa, they come down again to this material world and serve *māyā*—opening hospitals and doing other philanthropic work in this world, which they consider *māyā.* Because they

What Is the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement?

Founded in 1966 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) carries on a great ancient tradition rooted in the *Bhagavad-gītā,* the teachings Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke five millennia ago. The *Gītā* and the other Vedic scriptures declare Kṛṣṇa to be the original person, God Himself, who appears periodically in this world to liberate all living beings.

Only five hundred years ago, Kṛṣṇa descended as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu to teach the most sublime and effective means of meditation for the present day: the chanting of the names of God, especially as found in the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra.

Today members of ISKCON continue Lord Caitanya's movement by distributing the teachings of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra all over the world.

Pronunciation

We spell Sanskrit words and names by a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word. Pronounce short **a** like the **u** in b**u**t, long **ā** like the **a** in f**a**r (and held twice as long as the short **a**). Pronounce **e** like the **a** in ev**a**de, long **ī** like the **i** in p**i**que. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **ri**m, and **c** like the **ch** in **ch**air. Pronounce consonants like **ch**, **jh**, and **dh** as in staun**ch-h**eart, hed**ge-h**og, and re**d-h**ot. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh**. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

Spiritual Names

ISKCON members receive names of Lord Kṛṣṇa or his great devotees, combined with Dāsa, for men, or Dāsī, for women, both of which mean "servant." For instance, the name Kṛṣṇa Dāsa means "servant of Kṛṣṇa."

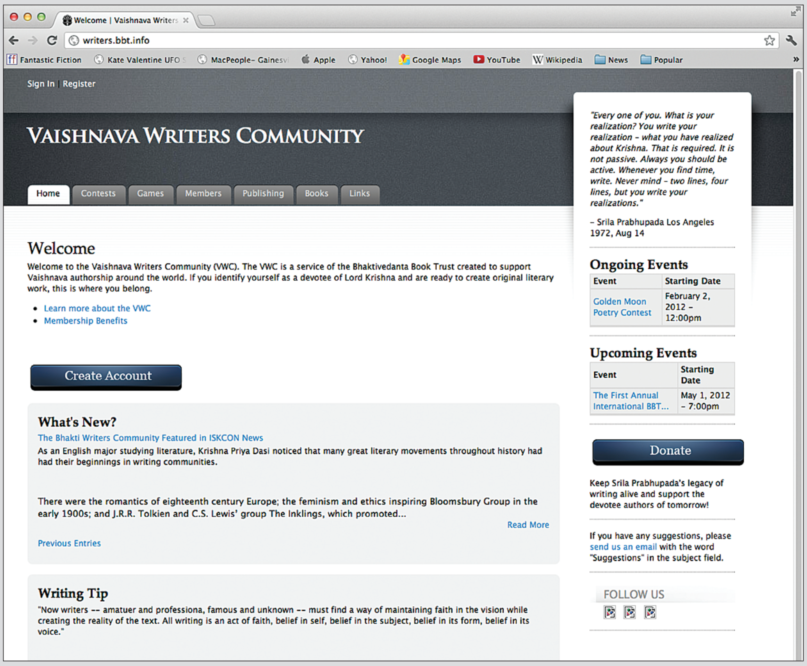
have no information about serving Kṛṣṇa, they fall down from Brahman, or *paraṁ padam*, the spiritual world. Brahman is also *paraṁ padam.* It is not material; it is the spiritual world. But those who have no shelter at the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa fall down again to the shelter of *māyā.*

This whole cosmic manifestation is nothing but the expansion of the potency or energy of Kṛṣṇa. This is the conclusion. This expansion of energy is impersonal. Kṛṣṇa is not impersonal; He is the original source. The sunshine is coming from the sun globe, but the sun globe is more important than the sunshine. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa's personality is more important than His impersonal feature, the expansion of His energy. If we understand the example of the sun, then it is very easy to understand the difference between the impersonal and the personal features of the Absolute Truth.

Thank you very much.

e-Krishna

Profiles of Kṛṣṇa-related websites



VAISHNAVA WRITERS COMMUNITY

Welcome

Welcome to the Vaishnava Writers Community (VWC). The VWC is a service of the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust created to support Vaishnava authorship around the world. If you identify yourself as a devotee of Lord Krishna and are ready to create original literary work, this is where you belong.

- Learn more about the VWC
- Membership Benefits

What's New?

The Bhakti Writers Community Featured in ISKCON News

As an English major studying literature, Krishna Priya Dasi noticed that many great literary movements throughout history had had their beginnings in writing communities.

There were the romantics of eighteenth century Europe; the feminism and ethics inspiring Bloomsbury Group in the early 1900s; and J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis' group The Inklings, which promoted...

Writing Tip

"Now writers -- amatuer and professiona, famous and unknown -- must find a way of maintaining faith in the vision while creating the reality of the text. All writing is an act of faith, belief in self, belief in the subject, belief in its form, belief in its voice."

"Every one of you. What is your realization? You write your realization – what you have realized about Krishna. That is required. It is not passive. Always you should be active. Whenever you find time, write. Never mind – two lines, four lines, but you write your realizations."

– Srila Prabhupada Los Angeles 1972, Aug 14

Ongoing Events

Event	Starting Date
Golden Moon Poetry Contest	February 2, 2012 – 12:00pm

Upcoming Events

Event	Starting Date
The First Annual International BBT...	May 1, 2012 – 7:00pm

Keep Srila Prabhupada's legacy of writing alive and support the devotee authors of tomorrow!

If you have any suggestions, please send us an email with the word "Suggestions" in the subject field.

http://writers.bbt.info/ is the website for the Vaishnava Writers Community, a Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT) project that came into being in February this year. The goals of the community are to help devotees improve their writing skills and to strengthen the voice of ISKCON in mainstream culture.

The welcome statement on the site says that if you identify as a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa and are ready to create original literary work, this is where you belong. The website brings together devotees from around the world and provides resources, support, and guidance for writers in a variety of ways:

In the Forums you can ask questions, join in discussions with other community members, and share your favorite authors, books, and ideas. You can join a writing group focussed on a particular goal, such as the "Children's Literature Group."

In the Feedback section you can post your writing projects for peer review and help other members by providing constructive criticism of their work.

A group of experienced devotees offer their services as mentors to the writers' community. You can ask a question by filling in an online form on the site. Mentors are editors, published authors, writing teachers, and others experienced in the writing craft.

Browse the sections on the website and you will find a number of online resources to help with your writing, including links to writing websites, podcasts, online writing classes, and information on how to get published.

To encourage writers, the community will sponsor regular competitions with awards for the best submissions. Your submission may win a cash prize and be published in a BBT print or online publication.

The Vaishnava Writers Community project was created by Kṛṣṇa Priyā Devī Dāsī after a suggestion from Kaiśorī Dāsī of the North European BBT. A former college English major who studies literature, Kṛṣṇa Priyā hopes that devotee writers will break the barrier of being published only in-house to write top quality literature embraced by the mainstream.

"I think that the public would appreciate it and gain a lot from it," she says. "Reading the *Bhagavad-gītā* is powerful, and it can be even more powerful to read about someone's real life experience in practicing its teachings."

—*Antony Brennan*

Glossary

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Ācārya—a spiritual master who teaches by example.

Balarāma—Lord Kṛṣṇa's first expansion, who acts in the role of Lord Kṛṣṇa's elder brother.

Battle of Kurukshetra—an epic battle for rule of the world, fought five thousand years ago.

Bhagavad-gītā—the sacred book in which Lord Kṛṣṇa gives the essence of knowledge to His friend and disciple Arjuna. (Cited as Bg.)

Bhakti—devotional service to the Supreme Lord.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura—the spiritual master of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.

Bhakti-yoga—linking with the Supreme Lord through devotional service.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu—the incarnation of Lord Kṛṣṇa who appeared five hundred years ago to teach the chanting of the names of God as the religion for the present age.

Darśana—"viewing," audience with a deity or saintly person.

Dharma—(1) ordained duties or religious principles; (2) one's eternal, natural occupation (i.e., devotional service to the Lord).

Godhead—the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Reality, progressively realized first as the impersonal all-pervasive oneness, more fully as the Supersoul within the heart of every living being, and ultimately as the all-opulent Supreme Person.

Gurukula—a school where children learn the philosophy and practices of Kṛṣṇa consciousness along with regular academic subjects (literally "the place of the guru").

Hare Kṛṣṇa—the great mantra Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

ISKCON—the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Japa—individual chanting of names of God, usually while counting on beads.

Kali-yuga—in the endlessly repeated cycle of four cosmic ages, the present and worst age, the Age of Quarrel, of which 5,000 of 432,000 years have passed.

Karma—material action; its inevitable reaction; or the law by which such action and reaction are governed.

Kīrtana—congregational singing of names of God, usually accompanied by cymbals (*karatālas*) and drums (*mṛdaṅgas*).

Kṛṣṇa—the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His original transcendental form (see "Godhead").

Mahābhārata—the epic history of ancient India, a history in which the *Bhagavad-gītā* appears as the most important and well-known text.

Māyā—illusion; the energy of the Supreme Lord that deludes living entities into forgetting their spiritual nature and forgetting God.

Māyāvādī—one who regards the Absolute Truth as ultimately impersonal.

Modes of nature—the three qualities (goodness, passion, and ignorance) that hold sway over all action in the material world.

Nityānanda—the incarnation of Lord Balarāma who appeared with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Prasāda—vegetarian food that has been prepared for the Lord and offered to Him with devotion.

Purāṇas—Vedic histories.

Rādhārāṇī—Lord Kṛṣṇa's consort and pleasure potency.

Rathayātrā—"chariot festival": a festival in which the form of Kṛṣṇa is borne in procession on a large canopy-topped chariot or float, especially the festival originating in Puri, India, for Jagannātha (Lord Kṛṣṇa, "the Lord of the universe").

Sannyāsa—the renounced life of a man who relinquishes home to dedicate himself fully to the Supreme.

Śāstra—scriptures, especially the Vedic scriptures of India.

Śrī—an honorific meaning "opulent" (similarly: Śrīla, Śrīmad, Śrīmān, Śrīmatī).

Śrīla Prabhupāda—His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, the founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam—the most important of the eighteen *Purāṇas,* which tells of the nature and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees.

Supersoul—the form of the Lord who resides in every heart along with the individual soul.

Vaiṣṇava—a devotee of the Supreme Lord (from the word *Viṣṇu*).

Varṇāśrama—the Vedic social system. It organizes society into four occupational and four spiritual divisions (*varṇas* and *āśramas*). The members of the four *varṇas* are the *brāhmaṇas* (intellectuals and priests), the *kṣatriyas* (administrators and soldiers), the *vaiśyas* (farmers and businessmen), and the *śūdras* (laborers and artisans). The members of the four *āśramas* are the *brahmacārīs* (celibate students), *gṛhasthas* (married people), *vānaprasthas* (retired people), and *sannyāsīs* (renunciants).

Vedas—the hymns of knowledge revealed by the Lord Himself at the beginning of creation.

Vedic—pertaining to the culture in which the *Vedas* and related scriptures guide all aspects of human life.

Viṣṇu—any form of the Personality of Godhead (see "Godhead"); the forms the Lord manifests to create and sustain the material world.

Vṛndāvana—the transcendental abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa, mirrored on earth as the town in India where Kṛṣṇa appeared five thousand years ago.

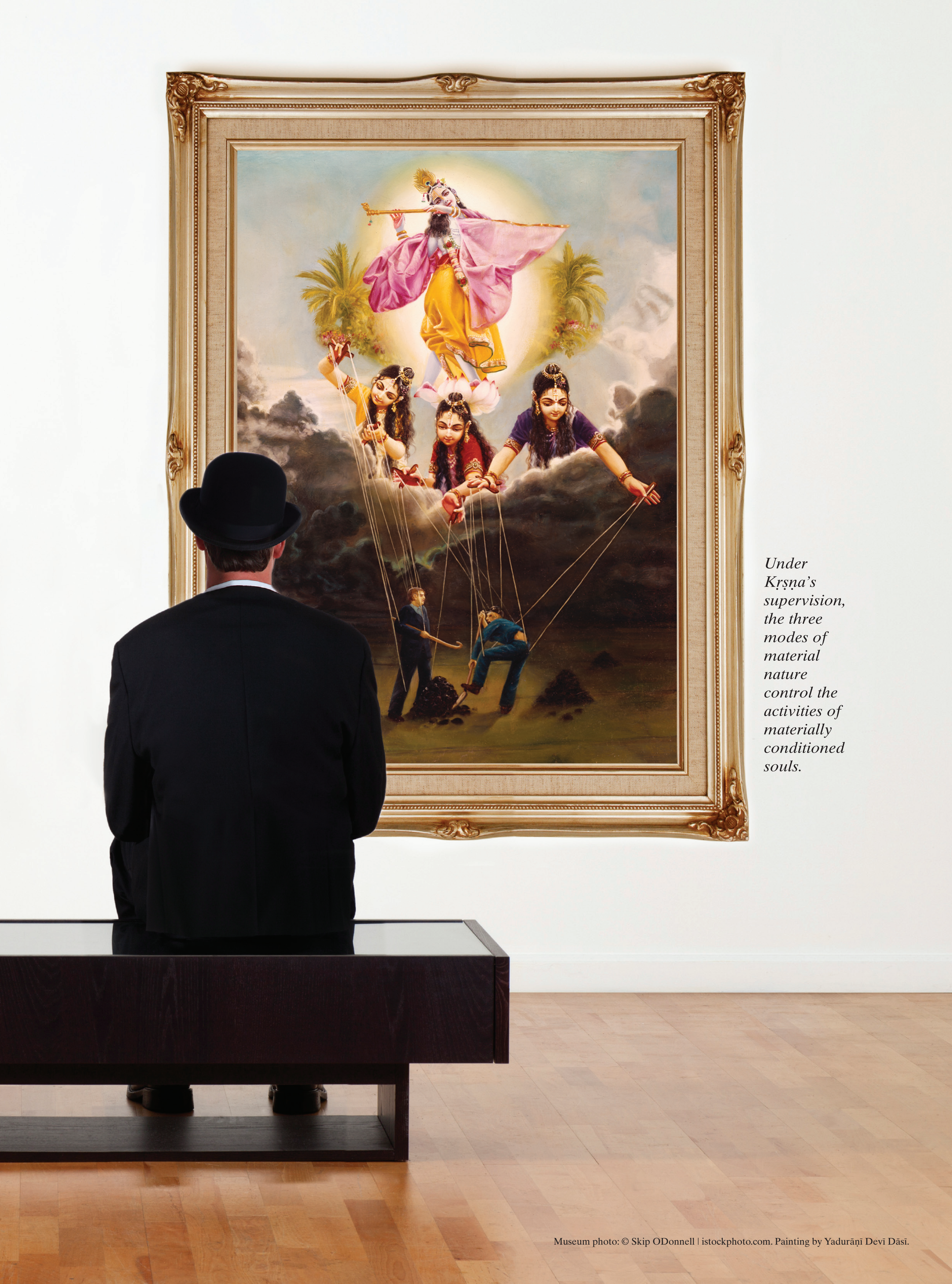
The Ropes That Bind Us

Understanding the guṇas *described in the Vedic literature provides a unique perspective on God, the world, and ourselves.*

By Navīna Śyāma Dāsa

THE MOST STRIKING building in Philadelphia is the Museum of Art. One of the largest museums in the United States, it sits atop a hill overlooking the Schuylkill River like a tawny-columned Greek monument. Within its more than two hundred galleries, one can find over 225,000 objects showcasing the creative talents of American, European, and Asian artists over the last several thousand years. A highlight is the world-renowned collection of French Impressionist paintings. Within its hundreds of constituent pieces (especially ones like Monet's "Poplars" and Cezanne's "Mont Sainte-Victoire") one can spot thousands of varied shades and hues. Yet all of the visual variety in the Impressionist gallery—and ultimately in the entire museum—arises from only three primary colors: yellow, red, and blue.

As amazing as it is to conceive of such complexity and beauty proceeding from this tripartite simplicity, Lord Kṛṣṇa makes an even more remarkable assertion in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. There He explains that the entire universe



Under Kṛṣṇa's supervision, the three modes of material nature control the activities of materially conditioned souls.

Museum photo: © Skip ODonnell | istockphoto.com. Painting by Yadurāṇī Devī Dāsī.

itself is ultimately just a product of the three *guṇas: sattvaṁ, rajaḥ,* and *tamaḥ.* In fact, Śrīla Prabhupāda often analogized to the primary colors to explain the enigmatic *guṇas:* "Originally there are three colors, red, blue, and yellow, and if you mix them together, they become green, orange, pink, and so many other colors. Similarly the combination of three qualities of material nature, *sattvaṁ, rajaḥ,* and *tamaḥ,* has created so many forms of living entities." (From "Manifestation of Dharma in Human Being," an early article published in the magazine *Dharma-prakash*) Making the same point in a lecture (Bombay, 1973), he concluded: "In this way, material nature is the greatest artist."

Just as a painter applies different blends of the primary colors to produce a masterpiece on canvas, so the Lord uses the *guṇas* as a palette for universal creation. Śrīla Prabhupāda even correlated yellow with *sattvaṁ,* red with *rajaḥ,* and blue with *tamaḥ,* explaining that these colors were "representations" of the *guṇas.* And he often described how when the three modes are "mixed with one another," they give rise to nine different combinations, and when these nine are mixed again, they produce eight-one combinations, and so on.

The *guṇas* are a feature of reality described only within the religious traditions of India (the Three Fates of ancient Greece being a possible exception; see the sidebar "The Three Fates"), yet they are not a technical detail or arcane subtlety; rather, the *guṇas* play a pivotal role in shaping the world as we know it. Kṛṣṇa speaks of them throughout the *Bhagavad-gītā,* and every extended prayer in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* refers to them. In fact, so essential and pervasive is their function that one can use the *guṇas* to differentiate between the principal categories of existence, namely God, the world, and the living beings.

The Three Fates

Sculpture of the Moirae on a funerary monument in the Alte Nationalgalerie (Old National Gallery), in Berlin, Germany.

AT LEAST ONE other culture seems to have embodied some knowledge of the *guṇas*—that of ancient Greece. The Moirae (more commonly known as the Three Fates) were understood to control the thread of life of every mortal being, with Clotho ("spinner") spinning the thread of life from her distaff onto her spindle, Lachesis ("allotter") measuring the thread of life allotted to each person with her measuring rod, and Atropos ("inevitable") cutting the thread of life with her shears. Not only is the general function of the *guṇas* and the Fates the same—shaping the destiny of living entities—but both sets of goddesses include one person associated with creation, one with continuation, and one with termination. In addition, the thread of life might be related to the translation of *guṇa* as a "rope."

Before we use the *guṇas* to paint the big picture, however, let's understand them better. Though the analogy to painting makes it seem like the *guṇas* are the building blocks of matter, this is not exactly the case. Rather, Kṛṣṇa explains in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that the material world is made up of earth, water, fire, air, and ether, as well as mind, intelligence, and false ego. And neither are the *guṇas* the moving force behind the universe, for that role is played by time. Instead, the *guṇas* govern how the matter made up of the eight elements and pushed along by time moves and behaves; the *guṇas* are the primordial forces that color and control the cosmos.

Some of the different English translations of *guṇa* help clarify the scope and nature of the term. The most common word Śrīla Prabhupāda used was "mode." In this sense, the *guṇas* represent the manner in which matter is experienced and expressed. Another translation he gave was "quality." In this sense the *guṇas* are the three primary qualities that, in various combinations, give living beings their personality and inanimate objects their distinguishing characteristics. Yet another translation is "rope." In this sense the *guṇas* are what bind us and limit us to perceive, think, and act in a certain way.

Symptoms of the Guṇas

Ultimately, however, the best way to understand the *guṇas* is to review their symptoms. In Chapters 14, 17, and 18 of the *Bhagavad-gītā* and Chapter 25 of the Eleventh Canto of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* Kṛṣṇa provides a plethora of illustrations. Creation and activity characterize *rajaḥ.* The *deva* Brahmā oversees this *guṇa,* and he is, appropriately, the designer of the material world, shaping the bodies of all 8,400,000 species of life. Śrīla Prabhupāda translated *rajaḥ* as "passion," denoting the ardor for pleasure it invariably ignites. A person influenced by *rajaḥ* is always working hard to acquire prestige and fortune and thus inevitably feels anxiety; ultimately, therefore, this *guṇa* produces only sorrow. The reason for such intense endeavor is insatiable desire: No matter how much one gets, one remains unsatisfied and greedy for more. *Rajaḥ* makes one proud, envious, and subject to the emotional whims of the mind. A bustling metropolis is an example of a place in the mode of passion, and food in this mode is overly spicy, salty, or sour. Because pleasure derived through *rajaḥ* is based on sensual indulgence, it is ephemeral and quickly degenerates into pain.

Sattvaṁ is characterized by conservation and contentment. Lord Viṣṇu oversees this *guṇa,* lying on His snake-bed Śeṣa Nāga as He effortlessly maintains the universe. Śrīla Prabhupāda translated *sattvaṁ* as "goodness," not so much in the moral sense (although moral rectitude is certainly a byproduct of this mode), but in the broader sense of wholesomeness. One influenced by *sattva-guṇa* sees all living beings as part of the same spiritual nature. A person acting in the mode of goodness does so, not with the expectation of a reward or future happiness, but simply out of duty. Having no selfish desires, such a person is never frustrated; whatever the result, he or she continues to act with determination and enthusiasm. Eventually, such steadfastness yields knowledge, satisfaction, and simplicity. Natural spaces like forests are in the mode of goodness, and food in this mode is juicy, fatty, and wholesome. Because *sattvaṁ* happiness is derived from the self, it takes some initial effort to access, but once obtained, it bestows lasting fearlessness.

Tamaḥ is characterized by destruction and oblivion. Śiva oversees this *guṇa,* and when it is time for the universe to be wound up, his calamitous dance sets the terminal process in motion. Śrīla Prabhupāda translated *tamaḥ* as "ignorance," and a person under its influence is certainly of meager knowledge and unable to tell right from wrong. He or she laments the past, procrastinates in the present, and futilely dreams of the future. Stingy, thoughtless, and violent, such a person is doomed to depression and ultimately madness. Dark and dirty places, like urban gambling dens, are in the mode of ignorance, and food in this mode is stale, tasteless, and contaminated. The illusory pleasure derived from *tamaḥ* has its roots in sleep and degradation.

God, the World, The Guṇas, and Us

Now that we have a sense of what the *guṇas* are like, we can return to our original project of using them as a philosophical lens through which to view the universe. Based on their relationship to the modes, we can differentiate among the principal categories of existence. We begin with this world. The realm of matter is a product of the three *guṇas,* in that they determine what shape it takes and how it operates. As a result of its contact with them, this world continually undergoes various cycles of existence, from dormancy to development to continuation, and then back to dormancy. And the living beings who dwell here are similarly pushed and pulled by the influence of the *guṇas.*

But there is another realm, composed of spirit and not subject to the *guṇas*. Or, more precisely, it is not subject to any trace of *rajaḥ* or *tamaḥ.* Rather, it exists in a state known as *śuddha-sattva,* or pure, unadulterated goodness. Thus, the spiritual world always remains as it is, and its inhabitants enjoy a steady state of full awareness and bliss.

Then there is the Lord. He is perpetually beyond the reach of the *guṇas;* on the contrary, they are an exhibition of His own power and function under His supervision. He takes on various forms within the spiritual world, and when there is need, He also descends to the material world. Those bewildered by *rajaḥ* or *tamaḥ* believe that His terrestrial humanlike form consists of matter and is controlled by the *guṇas*. But those in knowledge understand that God remains, under all conditions and at all times, the undisputed master of all existence.

Finally, we have the living beings. Like the Lord, they originally reside in the spiritual world beyond the *guṇas*. And they too can choose to come down to the material world. But, unlike the Lord, when they do so they fall under the *guṇas'* control. The majority of *jīvas* never make that fateful choice, content to remain with the Lord in His spiritual kingdom. There they live on practically the same level as God, endowed with the same form, a shared residence, and equal opulence. But those who give in to their morbid curiosity take on various forms, according to the *guṇas* to which they are attracted. As an artist mixes the primary colors to create a particular hue, so the Lord combines the modes to create a

The spiritual world always remains as it is, and its inhabitants enjoy a steady state of full awareness and bliss.

specific type of mind and body for each living entity. This distinct amalgamation acts like a colored filter on the *jīva's* pure consciousness, affecting how he or she perceives and acts upon the external world.

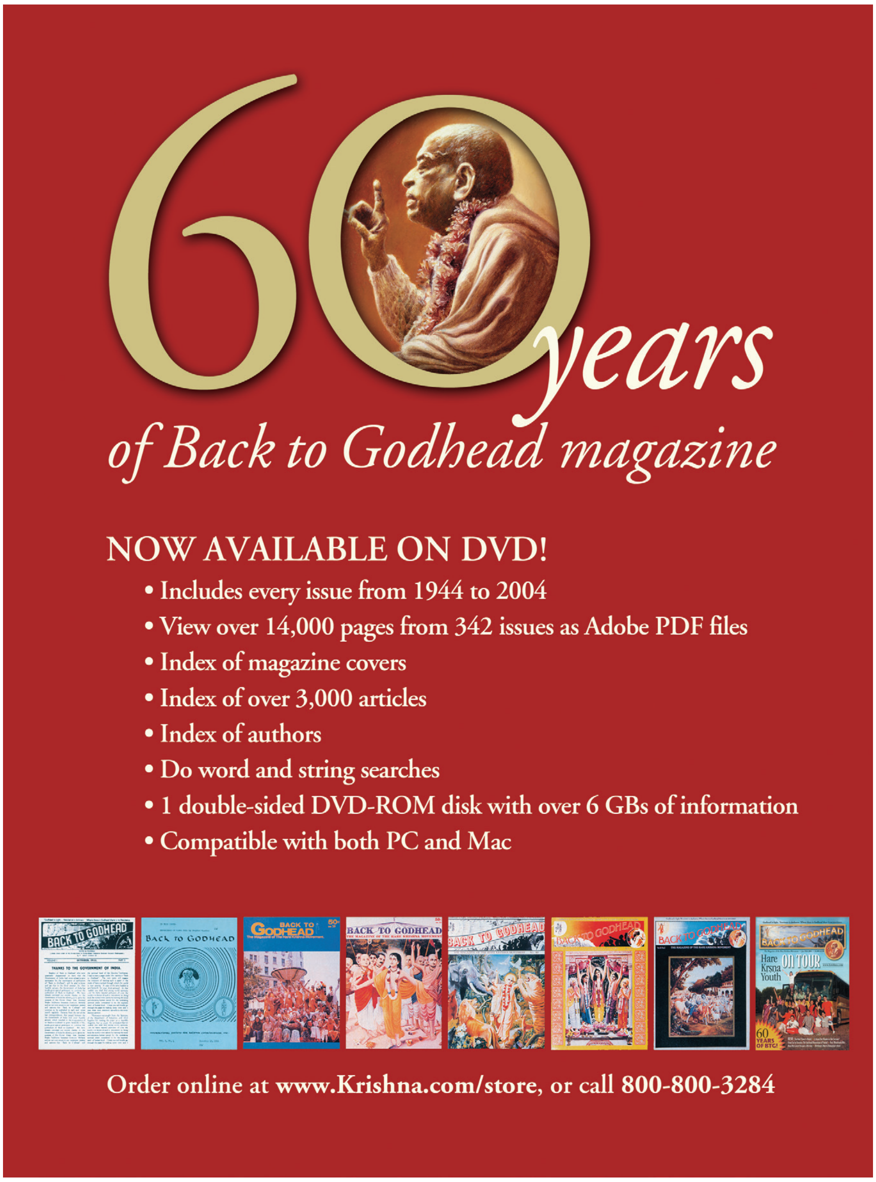
Unfortunately, not everyone gets rose-colored glasses. Depending on their previous desires and activities, human beings develop and express different qualities, in some blend of the sublime peace of *sattvaṁ,* the unabating turbulence of *rajaḥ,* and the shadowy delusion of *tamaḥ.* Even the various animal species are divided thus, the cow being associated with *sattvaṁ,* the lion with *rajaḥ,* and the monkey with *tamaḥ.*

Applied Knowledge Of the Guṇas

Though this unique feature of Indian theology certainly illuminates the various categories of existence, helping us understand the relationship between the living beings, the world, and God, knowledge of the *guṇas* also serves a practical purpose. First, we can use this knowledge to decipher which *guṇas* influence us as individuals. Am I an overachiever, full of energy and motivation to pursue my goals, but generally carried away by my successes, crushed by my failures, and overwhelmed by the incessant flow of my desires? The strong sway of *rajaḥ* is likely to blame. Am I subject to bouts of laziness or anger, or addicted to the diversion provided by intoxication? If so, *tamaḥ* has surely taken hold.

When we identify the influence of these two lower *guṇas* in our lives, our next step is to alter our habits by striving to think, speak, and act in the mode of goodness, letting go of the anxiety of *rajaḥ* and shaking off the torpor of *tamaḥ.* Kṛṣṇa assures us that association with the quality of goodness has an elevating effect, and that the practice of acting in goodness can help us regain our position with Him in the spiritual kingdom, where everyone and everything is saturated with pure *sattvaṁ.* But if the inborn tendencies of our conditioned nature seem insurmountable, we need not fear. The renowned speaker of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* Śukadeva Gosvāmī, informs us that serving Kṛṣṇa with a heart full of love is the quickest and easiest way to cultivate goodness. Indeed, completely offering ourselves to God is the only means by which we can transcend the *guṇas* entirely and be reinstated in our natural condition of *śuddha-sattva,* goodness without a tinge of passion or ignorance. So whether the canvas of one's life is colored like the periwinkle of Monet's "Flowers in a Vase" or the jade of Pissarro's "Vegetable Garden," the common goal of every being in this world should be to try and bring a little more "yellow" into the picture. If we make the attempt, for the sake of pleasing Kṛṣṇa and in full consciousness of Him, He'll finish the job Himself, quickly flooding the canvas of our lives with His golden mercy.

Navīna Śyāma Dāsa is a disciple of His Holiness Bhakti Cāru Swami. He lives with his wife, Kṛṣṇa Priyā Dāsī, and their infant daughter, Varada Lila, in Philadelphia, where he is a law student at Temple University. He can be contacted through his website, VastuShyam.com.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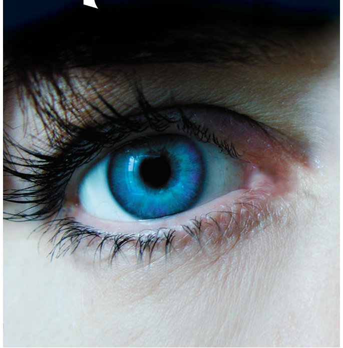
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Sacred Cows and Other Slurs

by Mathureśa Dāsa

WHEN A NATIONAL radio talk-show host criticized First Lady Michelle Obama for her "uppityism," observers on both sides of the political spectrum were aghast. "Uppity" is a derogatory label traditionally connected with the description of African American slaves who were not sufficiently servile. And Mrs. Obama is, of course, the first African American First Lady.

The same radio host had, earlier last year, mocked the visiting president of China as well as Chinese culture by doing an imitation of the Chinese president's "strange" manner of speech and describing the Chinese lettering system as "chicken scrawl." Then too, many listeners were appalled.

Routinely Unnoticed

Remarks like these provoke widespread disapproval while, just a few weeks before the "uppity" incident, an equally derogatory expression, disparaging an entire ethnic and religious tradition, went unnoticed because, well, it routinely goes unnoticed. A Republican presidential candidate was talking about reducing the national debt by doing away with wasteful government programs backed by entrenched interests in Washington, D.C.

"What I propose will not be easy," the candidate said. "Washington is full of sacred cows that supposedly can't be slaughtered . . ."

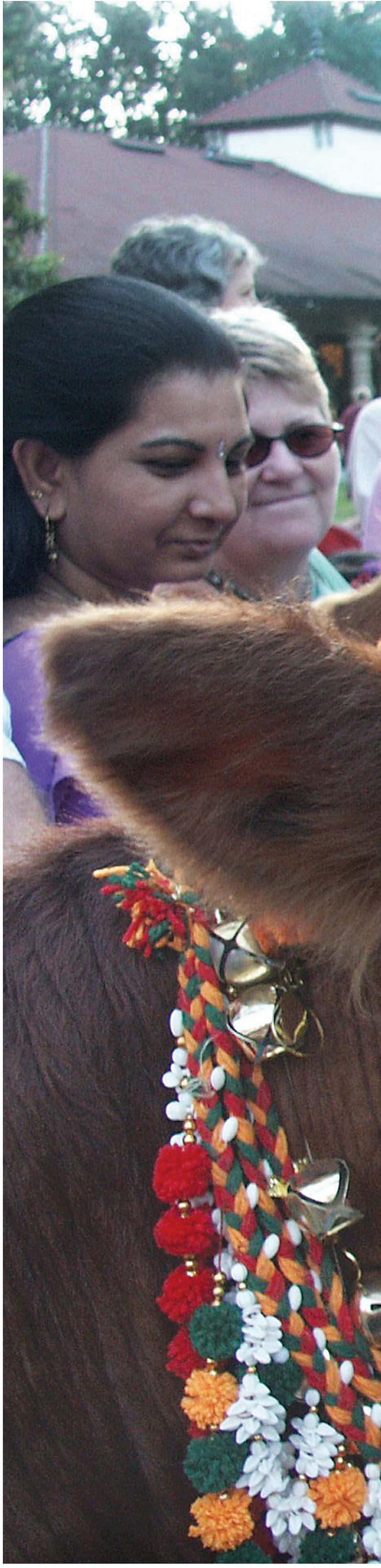
Sacred cows. You know, the stupid things people revere without rhyme or reason, epitomized by the cows in India that any sensible person sees as God's gift to humanity for hamburgers, steaks, belts, shoes, and handbags. And for great Western movies starring, by delirious twists of historical and geographical illiteracy, cowboys and Indians.

Trouble is, hundreds of millions of people do worship cows, holding them sacred. A century or more after the coining of the term "sacred cow" an entire subcontinent has not bowed to the wasteful wonder of grain-fed cowboy meat production that is a major contributor to global food scarcity. Go figure. And Blacks are still uppity, the Chinese still write in chicken scrawl, and the British still worship royalty and drive on the wrong side of the road. All of which calls for tolerance and understanding. If for no other reason than to respect an ancient religious and cultural tradition that is not going to disappear, "sacred cow" in these politically correct times ought to go the way of other racial epithets and cultural slurs.

But it might also help to know that cows have always been and remain today an essential part of the Indian village economy. They are not a cause of India's economic woes. Credit for those woes is better awarded to the variety of cowboys who plundered the country for the hundreds of years prior to India's independence.

The Cow's Value

For a minimum of care and without hormones and force-feeding, cows in Indian villages provide milk, butter, and other nutritious milk products while the bulls, as oxen, plow the fields and rice paddies. Their sunbaked dung is a clean, sustainable, slow-burning cooking fuel. When they die, their hides and flesh may be used. But they are not slaughtered.


Yamarāja Dāsa

Cows and bulls are working members of the community and receive the respect naturally offered to a mother and father. As a mother gives milk and a father works to provide food, so the cow and bull are a second mother and father. At least from the point

of view of this one time-honored culture.

If that is not sacred enough for Western cowboys, then yes, too, cows and bulls are an essential part of the Indian religious system. The *Bhagavad-gītā* lists farming, care of cows, and trade as primary functions of the business community. Cows and cow by-products are essential elements in Hindu religious ceremonies. Lord Kṛṣṇa, the speaker of the *Gītā,* tends cows as part of both His earthly and otherworldly pastimes.

Whether it is from political correctness, from understanding the cow's irreplaceable economic contribution to Indian life, or from respecting an ancient religious tradition, "sacred cow" should be a term of understanding, not of ridicule. We need to watch what we say, either as radio talk-show hosts or as uppity cowboys.

Mathureśa Dāsa has written many articles for BTG over the years and lives in Gainesville, Florida.

Christian Salas

WELCOME
TO Fabulous
LAS VEGAS
NEVADA

Kṛṣṇa's New Playground

After getting too many hints they couldn't ignore, a devotee couple decides, with reasonable trepidation, to open a Kṛṣṇa temple in Sin City.

By Kṛṣṇa-māyī Devī Dāsī

"WHAT DO YOU think about opening a center in Las Vegas?" asked Badrinārāyaṇa Prabhu, whose area of responsibility as one of ISKCON's governing body commissioners (GBC) includes Nevada.

I looked at my husband in disbelief.

This must be a joke, I thought, *Why Las Vegas, of all places on earth? What Kṛṣṇa devotee cultivating a life of high moral values and principles would voluntarily jump into the jaws of Sin City?*

It was 2001, and on our way from St. Louis to San Diego, where we were now speaking with Badrinārāyaṇa Prabhu, we had just passed through Las Vegas. What a scary sight! Glittering billboards advertised all kinds of abominable activities, inviting visitors to indulge in extreme sense gratification. Being from Europe, we had never seen such a place.

I guess that similar thoughts must have crossed my husband's mind when he heard Badrinārāyaṇa Prabhu's proposal.

"No, thank you," my husband, Surapāla Dāsa, politely but firmly declined. "I'm not qualified to take up that service in such a challenging place as Las Vegas."

I took a deep breath of relief.

Leaving Europe for America

My mind traveled back in time and space to Denmark. It was 1998. We were getting ready to board a flight to Boston, not in search of a better life and riches but to find a suitable situation for devotional service. Leaving the secure community of

By opening a Hare Kṛṣṇa temple, Surapāla Dāsa and Kṛṣṇa-māyī Devī Dāsī have brought a new attraction to "The Entertainment Capital of the World."

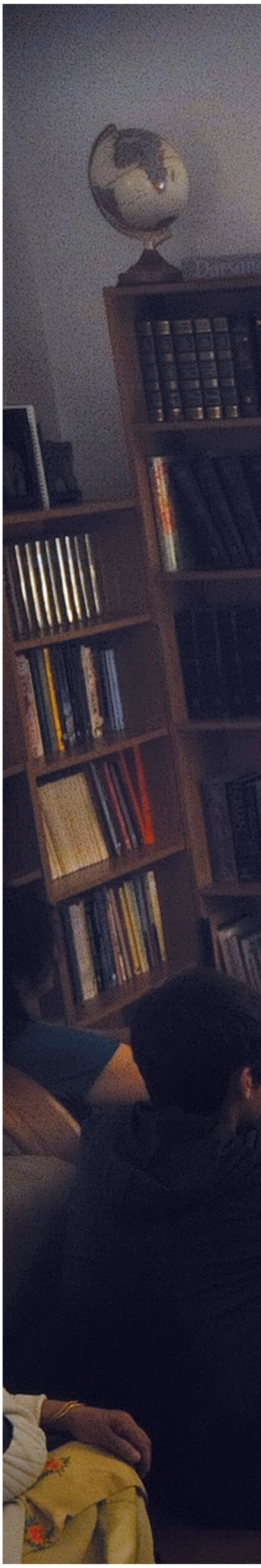
Danish devotees and embarking on a journey to the unknown land of America was not easy for me. But my husband had a burning desire in his compassionate heart to spread Kṛṣṇa's message, so at the first opportunity, when an a old devotee friend of his invited us to the Boston temple to help with managing and preaching, my husband accepted without a second thought. He had learned English by hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* classes at the Copenhagen temple, so now the door to a wider field for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness was open to him.

My husband joined the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement in 1980 in Poland. Carefully and lovingly trained in the art of *bhakti* by His Holiness Devāmṛta Mahārāja and tasting the bliss of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, he developed an intense desire to share this nectar with others. When Communism collapsed in 1986, he preached all over Poland, planting the seeds of *bhakti* in the hearts of many seeking souls, including myself. Preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness became his very life and soul.

We met in 1987, got married in 1990, and together embarked on a beautiful and rewarding journey in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. I never expected it would take us to a place so distant as America, but in 1998 we landed in Boston, and after a three-month stay moved to the St. Louis temple. My husband served as the temple president there for three years, and then Romapāda Mahārāja, our GBC, encouraged us to take a much-needed transcendental vacation. So we embarked on an exciting North American tour, unaware of the surprise awaiting us at the end. We traveled from temple to temple, gaining new experiences and reenergizing with the inspiring association of wonderful Vaiṣṇavas. We visited temples in Kansas City, Denver, Spanish Fork, Los Angeles, and Laguna Beach, then headed south to San Diego.

Everywhere we went, devotees suggested we open a center in one city or another. So here we were in San Diego, walking on the beach,

Christian Salas (4)



Kṛṣṇa-māyī (right) speaks about Kṛṣṇa consciousness during a Sunday Feast. Above (from top), the deities of ISKCON Las Vegas: Rādhā-Govinda; Gaura-Nitāi; Jagannātha, Baladeva, and Subhadrā.

enjoying the fresh air and the pleasant ocean breeze, and wondering if Kṛṣṇa was trying to tell us something. We were foreigners and had always resided in a temple or a devotee community. The thought of living on our own was not easy to digest. And we were obligated to the St. Louis temple. Feeling perplexed, we decided to continue our transcendental vacation as planned and see what the future would bring.

After our arrival in Tucson, Arizona, the temple president spent all day long talking with us about the importance of opening temples and how much it pleased Śrīla Prabhupāda.

"I don't know why Kṛṣṇa is arranging all of this for us," my husband told me. "I don't feel qualified to establish a new temple. To be convinced, I need a tangible sign from Kṛṣṇa that this is what we need to do."

At the very moment he finished speaking, we heard a knock on our

Guests help prepare and serve an elaborate feast of kṛṣṇa-prasāda *(below). At right, Kṛṣṇa-māyī answers questions at a book table during a library program that had Drutakarmā Dāsa (Michael Cremo), author of* Forbidden Archeology *and other books, as the guest speaker.*

Surapāla Dāsa (2)

guestroom door. The Tucson temple president excitedly exclaimed that Gaṇapati Swami had just called him from Las Vegas looking for someone who could open a center there. Now it was quite clear to us that Kṛṣṇa was directing us where to go and what to do. After being assured by the temple president that we would get the blessings of the GBC for St. Louis, we decided to open a center in Las Vegas.

Māyā's Great Playground

We had planned to end our vacation in Vrindavan, India, but due to Kṛṣṇa's amazing sense of humor, we were ending it in a place completely opposite to Vrindavan. Kṛṣṇa was inviting us back to the very place we had wanted to run away from.

Las Vegas, as everyone knows, stands for mega Kali-yuga entertainment. With its abundant gambling, prostitution, intoxication, and meat-eating, it is about as far from the devotee's way of life as one can imagine. Even in the current recession, the city still boasts thirty-seven million tourists a year. *Māyā's* great playground attracts millionaires and billionaires from around the world, and the development of theme-park resorts over the last few decades has made it a vacation destination for families as well.

"Separation from spirituality is a heavy music that falls on Las Vegas," our new Las Vegas friend Christopher told us. "I think Kṛṣṇa arranged your move here to prove that God and the spirit of Vrindavan can be found anywhere."

Our humble beginning was not easy, but Kṛṣṇa always helped us. We spent the first month at a budget motel that was neither attractive nor safe. We ate canned beans heated on a small electric burner.

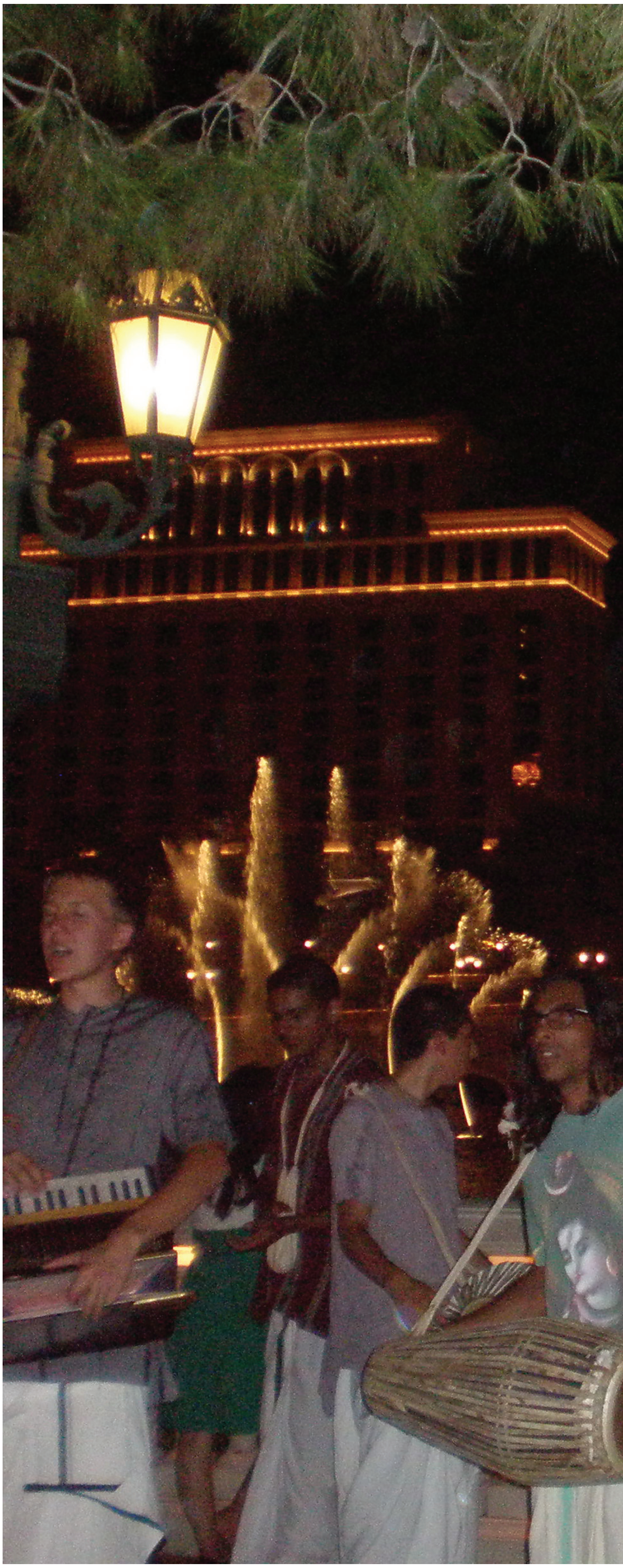
Then one of Kṛṣṇa's friends in Las Vegas assisted us with obtaining a home loan. The loan officer was a little shocked to meet his new clients, missionaries with no credit or employment history, no substantial savings, and no salary.

"I've never had a case like this," he said, "but still, I'm going to try."

We were approved for the loan within a short time, and in the beginning of 2002 we bought a small house at 5226 Sandstone Drive, the first Kṛṣṇa conscious oasis in Las Vegas.

We started with Sunday programs, and attendance was small at first. Sometimes it was just the two of us, but we were not about to give up and added monthly public pro-

Surapāla Dāsa



Prahlāda sits on Lord Nṛsiṁha's lap during a temple play (above). At right, the dancing fountains of the Bellagio Hotel accompany Lord Caitanya and His devotees as they chant on the famous Las Vegas strip.

grams at the main library in Las Vegas.

After a few months, we incorporated our new establishment as ISKCON of Las Vegas. Although Kṛṣṇa consciousness had begun to flourish, our financial struggles continued. As missionaries with no Green Card, we were not yet able to be employed legally. We worked seasonally, distributing phone books. Driving an old Volvo station wagon, a donation from our new GBC, Badrinārāyaṇa Prabhu, we began working at five in the morning because the car had no air conditioner. June and July are the hottest months in Las Vegas, the temperature reaching well over 100° F. For Europeans like us, it was like experiencing hell.

We gradually fell behind on the mortgage payments and got more and more into debt. We started making plans to return to Poland. But Lord Kṛṣṇa had plans of His own.

Kṛṣṇa Sends Help

It was November of 2003. One day we went to the Fremont Street Experience to pick up some free souvenirs from casinos to send as Christmas gifts to our families back in Poland. The casino girls were inviting passersby inside: "Free pull and you win prizes." I could see

Kṛṣṇa-māyī Devī Dāsī

people coming out with different souvenirs and thought it sounded like a good deal.

"Let's try," I said to my husband and walked inside the casino.

As he followed me, a sudden thought crossed his mind: "You think you are going to receive a pen, but you will get $10,000."

This strange thought surprised him, but he didn't mention it to me.

We didn't consider what we were about to do to be gambling, which of course is against our principles. We were getting something for free; we just didn't know what.

As my turn approached, I pulled the slot-machine handle. The casino girl looked at the result with big eyes, then she looked again, then she looked at me.

> **A huge yellow banner with a beautiful picture of Kṛṣṇa advertised our programs to thousands of passing drivers.**

"Four queens!" she shouted excitedly. "You've just won $10,000!"

My husband and I were the only ones who stayed calm. Everyone around us was jumping in joy and yelling, "You just won $10,000!" as if the goal of our life had come true.

Armed security guards escorted us to the car. Upon arrival at our temple, we placed the $10,000 at the lotus feet of our deities, Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi. Feeling great gratitude in our hearts, we wondered at the Supreme Lord's mysterious ways. The following morning we paid all our debts and began the next chapter of the history of the Las Vegas temple.

Sometime later we were able to secure steadier jobs delivering newspapers. With time, my husband became a martial arts instructor, then a security guard, and is currently working as a clerk for the U.S. Postal Service. I completed college courses in Internet design and technology and started a business called Gopal Web Design, which allows me to work at home and manage the daily activities of the temple. We can now cover the temple's expenses, and thus Kṛṣṇa's mission here continues.

To be more accessible to visitors, in November of 2007 we decided to move our small temple from our house to an office suite and called it Govinda's Center of Vedic India. The new place was tiny but attractive and centrally located, close to the airport and facing a major intersection. A huge bright-yellow banner with a beautiful picture of Kṛṣṇa advertised our programs to thousands of passing drivers, many of whom called for more information.

When the lease expired in June of 2010, we moved into a beautiful temple near the Las Vegas Strip on historic Dean Martin Drive. From our front door one can see the entire skyline of the famed gambling kingdom just a few miles away. Ten years have already passed since we came to this city. What a journey it has been! From canned beans to sumptuous feasts, from a low-class motel room to a temple with a yoga studio, a gift shop, and guest rooms, from attendance of just the two of us to twenty or thirty grateful guests regularly. As I reflect on those years while looking at the shining skyline of Sin City from the temple's front porch, I am more and more amazed at how Lord Caitanya's prediction that Kṛṣṇa's name will be sung in every town and village is becoming a reality in front of my own eyes.

I feel very grateful to the Lord for so mercifully using us in His mission and bestowing upon us amazing realizations. Las Vegas is indeed the home of many needy souls. We humbly try to ensure that those interested get nourished spiritually, get plenty of *prasāda,* and have a spiritual place to know Kṛṣṇa and build a loving relationship with Him.

Besides the Sunday Feast, we conduct daily morning programs, weekly yoga classes, bi-weekly *Bhagavad-gītā* study, vegetarian cooking classes, transcendental picnics, and twice-a-year Bhakti Retreats. Last August we took part in the city of Henderson's first India Independence Day Parade. Nearly one hundred people attended our Janmāṣṭamī celebration.

Las Vegas Rathayātrā

Since 2012 commemorates the tenth anniversary of ISKCON Las Vegas, what better way to celebrate than to hold the first Rathayātrā not only in Las Vegas but in all of southern Nevada? As I write this, we're preparing this wonderful festival for April 21, 2012. The ancient Rathayātrā festival signifies, among other things, bringing Kṛṣṇa into our hearts. The Las Vegas Rathayātrā will be part of our attempt to bring divinity back into the lost culture of Las Vegas. And we hope that it will inspire those few spiritual seekers here who are sincerely striving for spiritual perfection but feel isolated and overwhelmed by the dark energies of the city.

We welcome devotees everywhere to celebrate with us ten years of chanting the holy names in Las Vegas and to bless us for the years to come.

A NOTE OF THANKS: *I would like to express my humble gratitude to my beloved gurudeva, His Holiness Devāmṛta Mahārāja, for his everflowing mercy that gives us strength to continue our service in Las Vegas, and to Badrinārāyaṇa Prabhu for his encouragement and inspiration. My deepest thanks to my dear husband for his daily guidance and compassion, and to all Las Vegas devotees and friends for their love and support.*

I Found Kṛṣṇa
IN LAS VEGAS

A lifelong search for God ends in the most unexpected of places.

By Lisa Chastain

LAST YEAR I FOUND myself at the doorstep of Govinda's Center of Vedic India and Rādhā-Govinda Mandir, Las Vegas. A dear friend of mine had invited me to hear him speak. I wasn't entirely sure about what, but I hadn't seen him in years and was bubbling with excitement to see him again. I highly value diversity and culture and embrace new experiences, so even though I knew little about where I was going and what I'd hear, I was eager to experience something new that night.

I was raised Southern Baptist and prayed to God every night when I was a little girl. Despite my best efforts throughout the years, however, I always felt distant from Him. At about fifteen years old I stopped attending church after my parents gave me a choice, and at eighteen I found myself searching to fill a void within. I sought refuge with my best friend, and she encouraged me to learn more about her life with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Just a month before my first day in college, I was planning to be baptized into the Mormon faith. Only after radical protest from my mother and father was I convinced it wasn't the path for me. After that, I felt disappointed and defeated, and I closed myself off to God for many years.

Surapāla Dāsa

I've been vegetarian now for nearly fifteen years, and my personal mantra since I can remember has been "Take care of Mother Earth and respect all living beings." My college years were a blend of partying, studying, working, and intense and deep conversations with friends about the meaning of life. After being religiously dormant and generally turned off by organized religion, my search for God was rekindled in the post-9/11 world. Along with the rest of the country, the word *jihad* meant little to me before that time. I grew eager to understand the Middle East and how religion played a role in the terrorist activity around the world. And I looked closer at America's relationships with the rest of the world.

I studied world religions and philosophies. I spent a semester reading the Koran and investigating its relationship with Christianity and Judaism. I also read the Tao and took interest in Eastern philosophies as well as religious authors such as Khalil Gibran.

After nearly two years of conversation, study, and inquiry, I had a much vaster understanding of the major religions of the world, but had not found the one I could identify with. Ten years later I was still looking. Though hopeful, I didn't know when, where, or if I would ever meet God in this lifetime. Little did I know that everything would change during my first visit to Govinda's/ISKCON Las Vegas.

My First Temple Visit

As I entered the 1970's Las Vegas home converted into Govinda's Center of Vedic India, the aroma of incense filled the air and lightened my senses. The casual yet organized ambiance of the temple felt familiar and inviting. A surge of memories flooded my mind, and I compared this setting to those of other religious institutions I had been exposed to. I remember saying, "Wow, this is so comfortable and inviting!"

When I saw my friend Ben (Pyāri Caraṇa Dāsa), we embraced and I secretly held back tears of joy brought on by our reunion. The setting was so different from our haphazard college days, but what remained was our deep and profound intellectual and loving connection to one another. After we took a few minutes to briefly catch up, Pyāri introduced me to the temple president, Surapāla, and his humble and lovely wife, Kṛṣṇa-māyī. I eagerly worked on pronouncing both names (which took me several weeks), but it felt as though I had known them my entire life.

I had arrived about fifteen minutes early for the program, and while Pyāri and my new friends were preparing for the evening's service, I soaked in my surroundings. My heart pounded and my mind reeled. I was sitting just five minutes' drive from the Las Vegas strip, but I felt I had been transported to another world.

I was anxious to know just what I would be taking part in. Several people arrived, and Pyāri asked me to sit with him close to the front. Looking around, I noticed the panoramic juxtaposition of the vibrant view of the Las Vegas strip out of the front window of the temple and, with a turn of my head, another world, with a beautiful shrine of deities and photographs of gurus. The words Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare were printed in a golden frame just below the shrine. Several minutes into the program, the intimate congregation of about fifteen people began to sing the mantra, accompanied by a joyous man playing what looked like a stationary accordion. Pyāri played small cymbals, and Surapāla played a double-sided drum. I felt as though I had traveled back in time many years to India, but my mind and heart had not been so present anywhere else in a long time. The melody soothed my soul, and tears welled in my eyes.

Feeling a bit awkward, I stuttered my way through my first *kīrtana.* As we sang, I looked around, and as I made eye contact with Kṛṣṇa-māyī and Pyāri, they gave me reassuring nods I interpreted as, "Yes, you are home, and you are safe in our company."

It took much fortitude for me not to break down into tears right then and there. It was as if the music and lyrics were speaking directly to my soul—soothing my worries and embracing my aching heart.

I wanted to stay in that sweet and peaceful moment forever. But after thirty minutes the *kīrtana* ended and the program transitioned to Pyāri's talk. This was the first time I had ever heard of Kṛṣṇa, or "the Supreme Personality of Godhead." Although the lexicon was new to me, the talk made so much sense. Pyāri poignantly discussed how we all have contaminated and conditioned material egos. Kṛṣṇa wants us to develop a relationship with Him and to have eternal knowledge and bliss (*sat-cit-ānanda*), but no one in the material world knows how to do that. We all try so hard to be happy through material means, but only Kṛṣṇa can bring true and complete love.

It was as if the music and lyrics were speaking directly to my soul—soothing my worries and embracing my aching heart.

The conversation wasn't just about having faith and believing blindly, as most faiths ask you to do. Pyāri conveyed that in order to build a relationship with Kṛṣṇa, we must accept responsibility for the life we live in this material world. For this purpose Kṛṣṇa has mercifully given us the Vedic spiritual science of self-realization, or *bhakti-yoga.* Essentially, by using our senses, mind, and intelligence we can verify His omnipotence and omniscience. Furthermore, Pyāri impressed upon us that by invoking the various methods of *bhakti-yoga* we can taste Kṛṣṇa's kind and loving reciprocation with His devotees.

The words had a profound and positive impact on me. I was captivated and intrigued. Pyāri's talk ended that night, but my conversation about Kṛṣṇa continues today.

After spending nearly three hours at the temple, I had to relieve my babysitter and return to my life as a housewife. I bid adieu to Pyāri and my new friends Surapāla and Kṛṣṇa-māyī. With brochures about karma, peace, ISKCON, vegetarianism, and Govinda's Center, I jumped into my car and headed home.

The car ride was outwardly silent, but my mind replayed the evening's events over and over again. I could not stop smiling. I was overwhelmed with joy from seeing my college friend, and grateful to have the opportunity to be in the company of such loving and pious people. I knew that night meant the beginning of something serious and special for me.

Making Gradual Progress

Eager to know more, I returned to meet with Kṛṣṇa-māyī and Surapāla a few days later, and I have been attending temple activities, engaging in devotional service, and chanting for close to a year now. The struggle to balance my spiritual desires and needs with my material commitments of being a mother to a three-and-a-half-year-old son, as well as a wife, sister, friend, mentor, and daughter, have been overwhelming. In the never-ending sea of material entanglement, my sweet escape has been to Govinda's. Through my weekly *Bhagavad-gītā* classes, devotional service, *kīrtana,* and *japa,* I am slowly building a relationship with Kṛṣṇa.

Progress has been slow, and the transition has taken an emotional and physical toll on me. My husband has not been on this spiritual journey with me, and living in "Māyā's playground" of Las Vegas means temptation is everywhere. Some days I feel I'm living a dual life; learning how to balance spiritual and material life has been difficult. But I chant with faith and commitment, and each day I ask Kṛṣṇa for His mercy. I am sincere in my attempt to build a relationship with Him.

Two Inspiring Festivals

A turning point for me came when I attended the India Independence Day parade and the Janmāṣṭamī festival, which overwhelmingly reassured me I was on the right path.

Appreciating the influence of ISKCON in preserving India's spiritual culture and traditions, Friends of India invited ISKCON Las Vegas to take part in the inaugural India Independence Day parade and celebration on historic Water Street in downtown Henderson, Nevada. This would be the first time I would display my budding love for Kṛṣṇa in public. I was very nervous. But in the presence of my new spiritual friends, I became calm, and then I was elated to have the opportunity to take part in my first *harināma,* as the devotees call public chanting. Dressed in a beautiful donated sari, I arrived with few expectations but much curiosity.

As we unloaded and prepared to take part in the parade, I looked around to see the blend of American and Indian customs. To my left were my friends and devotees of ISKCON Las Vegas; to my right was a small petting zoo of animals that would be in the parade. In front of me were beautiful floats designed by various Indian organizations, and walking toward me were two people dressed up as Woody and Jessie from the American blockbuster *Toy Story 2.*

"Okay," I said to myself, "here we go!"

The parade lasted just under forty-five minutes. I was blissful from the first "Hare" to the last "Hare." As I sang the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra,* surrounded by new dear friends, my discomfort with public expression diminished and

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For more information or to register,
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for the first time since being introduced to *bhakti-yoga,* I let my guard down and just enjoyed the moment in devotional service.

The parade ended on a high note with our *harināma.* The crowd liked it, everyone smiling, clapping, and dancing along with us. As we turned the street to end the parade, Surapāla and Kṛṣṇa-māyī kept playing, and we kept singing. For twenty minutes as we walked back to our cars, we remained in sweet concert with one another. Kṛṣṇa-māyī's beautiful voice led the group, and step by step I felt my heart fall deeper and deeper for this new way of life. We all said good night and left in separate directions for our homes. We were all in for a very busy day the next day— Kṛṣṇa's birthday party, my first Janmāṣṭamī.

Besides planning and managing the children's activity for the evening, I had a lead role as Mother Yaśodā in the drama "Kṛṣṇa the Butter Thief," and I took part in decorating and cleaning the temple prior to the evening's events. The weekend had already been packed full of devotional service, and as I arrived at the temple an hour early, it was already buzzing with the most wonderful energy. Many people had arrived early. The kitchen was full of women preparing fresh flowers and aromatic *prasāda,* and by 7:00 P.M. seventy people were taking part in the *kīrtana.*

As I tended to the children making paper flowers with jewels to offer Kṛṣṇa during *ārati,* I was intoxicated by the smells of incense, fresh flowers, and cooking, and the sounds of *kīrtana,* children laughing, and old and new friends greeting one another. The traditional Indian dance and drama enlivened everyone, and the program closed with a loving, inspiring, and auspicious *ārati.*

The time had come for me to say goodnight to my new loving spiritual family. Soaking in every last drop of palpable energy from the temple, I walked slowly to my car, got in, and sat for a few minutes. I wanted the feeling to last forever.

Gratitude

We are all looking for something to give us happiness. I spent thirty-one years trying to be happy by material means. I know now that no material happiness can compare with that of lasting and genuine love of Kṛṣṇa. My weekend spent in devotional service to Kṛṣṇa was euphoric, and the months since then, although full of material complications and challenges, have been the most spiritually meaningful of my life.

With each day and experience, I grow closer to God. I have Surapāla, Kṛṣṇa-māyī, Pyāri Caraṇa, and above all Kṛṣṇa to thank for bringing Govinda's Las Vegas into my life. I know that the road ahead will be challenging and I have so much to learn. But as Pyāri reassured me on one of those difficult nights, Kṛṣṇa is always with us; He is our best friend. Knowing that gives me the confidence and strength to continue on this path back to Godhead, and Govinda's Center of Vedic India is making it possible, even in a place like Las Vegas.

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November 12–December 30, 2012
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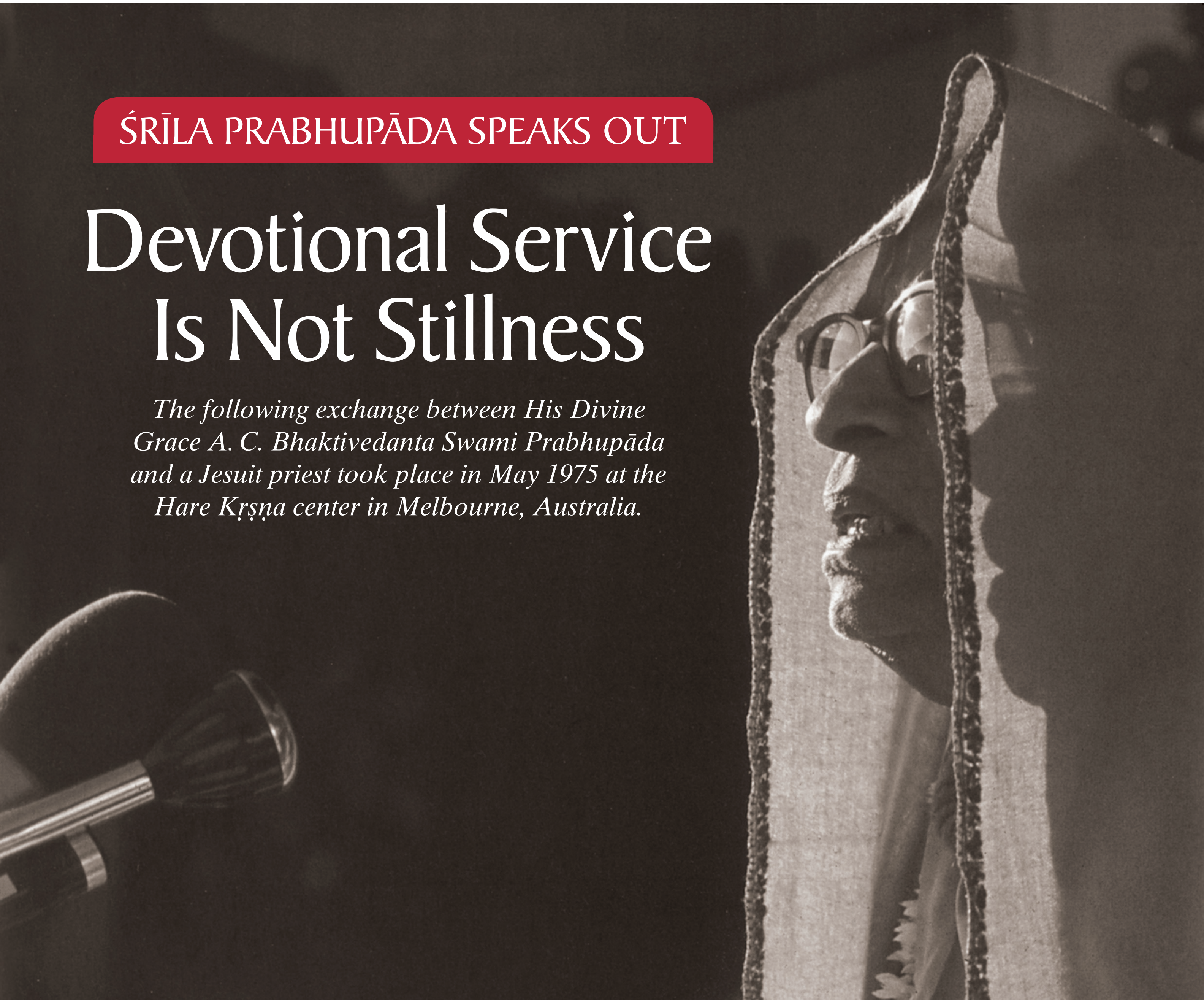
ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA SPEAKS OUT

Devotional Service Is Not Stillness

The following exchange between His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda and a Jesuit priest took place in May 1975 at the Hare Kṛṣṇa center in Melbourne, Australia.



Priest: Do you have what I might call a training in contemplation?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: We worship God in nine ways. One is *smaraṇam,* remembering God's activities. That is contemplation.

Priest: You know, in Christian mysticism we have a process of contemplation that St. Theresa of Avila described in her book *Interior Mansion.* Anybody is able to make an ordinary prayer, but the real mystic prayer is not given to everyone.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Our mystic prayer is to think of God's activities. Anyone can do it.

Priest: Ours is not so much thinking of God's activities as just being open to receive love, getting to that real stillness and quiet in which . . .

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. Devotional service, or *bhakti-yoga,* is not stillness. Stillness is the neutral stage of love of God, when you stop your material activities.

Priest: Could you further describe this neutrality?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: It is simply the stage of realizing that God is great. That is neutrality. But real devotional service begins when one understands, "Because God is so great, I should serve Him. Why am I uselessly rendering service to this world? Why not render service to God?" That stage is called *dāsyam,* or servitude. That is the beginning of *bhakti-yoga.*

Material activity simply entangles us in the repetition of birth and death. This is called *pravṛtti-mārga,* "activity for sense enjoyment." Everyone is busy working for sense

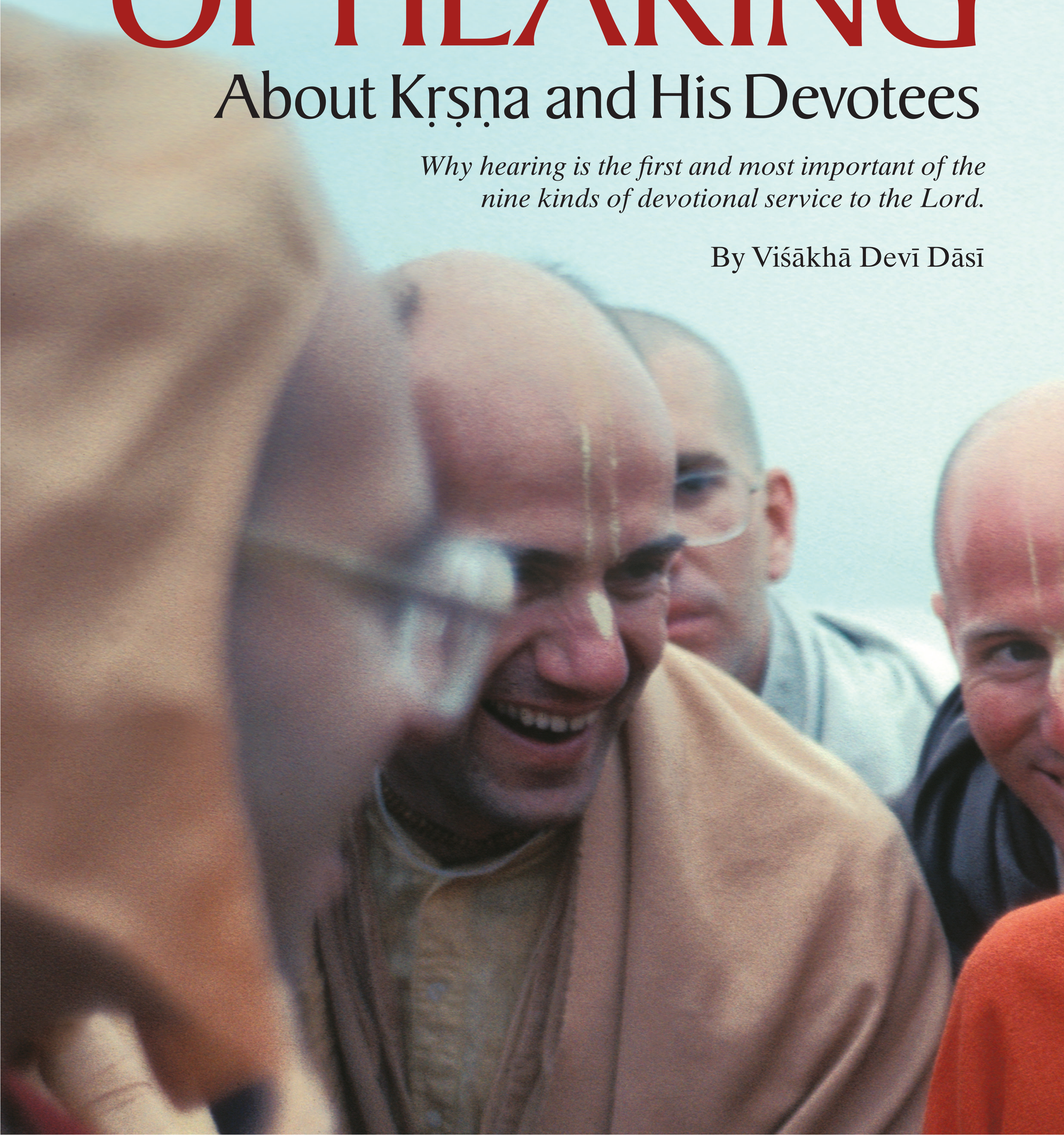
(*please turn to page 38*)

THE MAGIC OF HEARING

About Kṛṣṇa and His Devotees

Why hearing is the first and most important of the nine kinds of devotional service to the Lord.

By Viśākhā Devī Dāsī

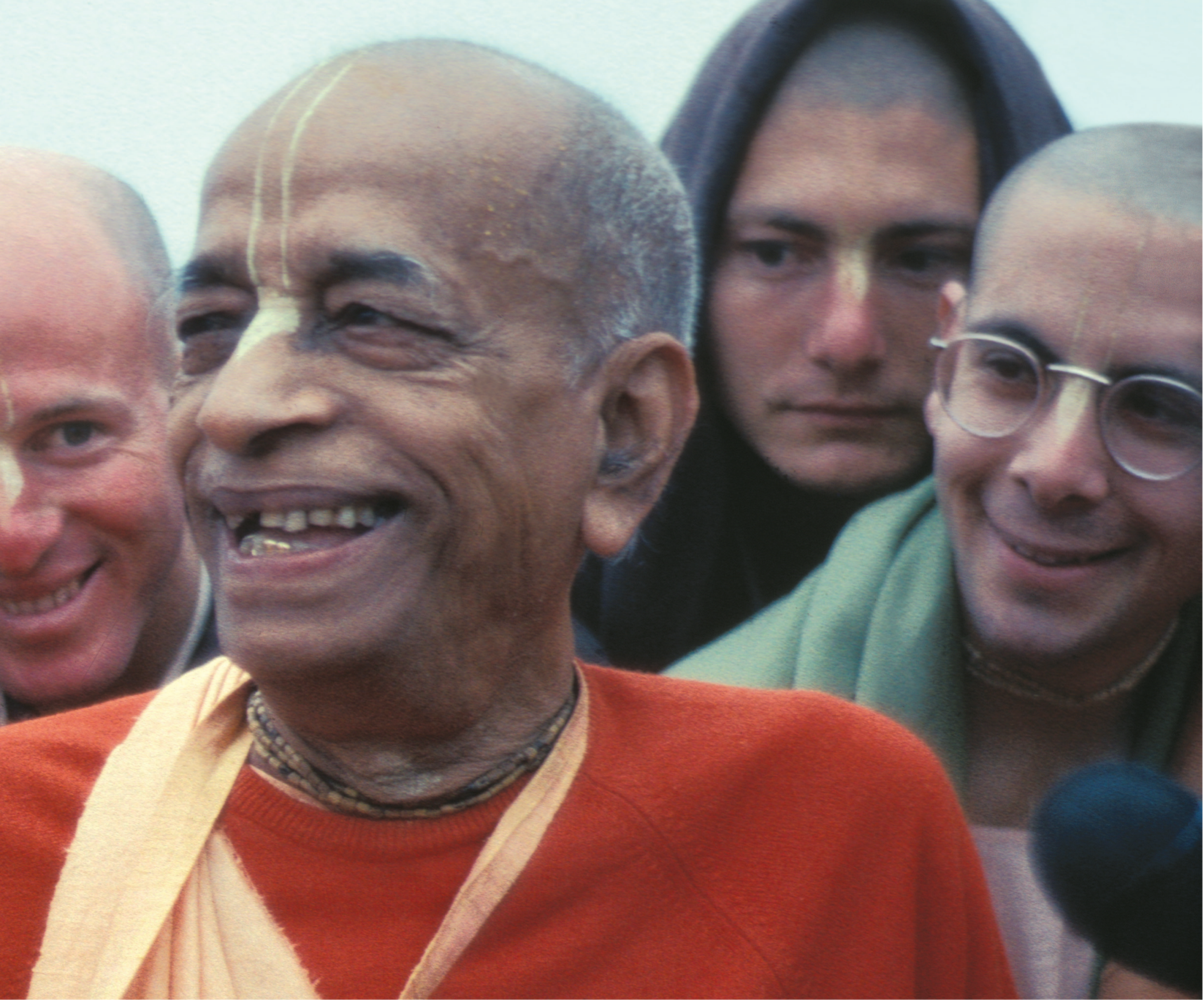


WHEN I FIRST read that hearing is the most important of the nine kinds of devotional service, I was confused. I was twenty-one at the time and had been hearing all day every day for my whole life. What was so special about hearing? Then I read that the "hearing" prescribed wasn't meant for mundane topics but for the activities and qualities of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. This hearing is a righteous activity, and when done without ulterior motives—like the desire to be entertained or to become popular, influential, or opulent—it's singularly transformative.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* I read some of the achievements devotees could look forward to when they heard properly about Kṛṣṇa: they'd become fearless (1.19), free of lamentation (2.11), tolerant and undisturbed (2.13), resolute in purpose (2.41), transcendental to the three modes of nature (2.45), peaceful and happy (2.66). They would also attain love for Kṛṣṇa (4.10), cross the ocean of miseries (4.36), see all beings equally (5.18), check the force of anger (5.23), renounce sense enjoyment (6.3), curb their restless minds (6.35), unite intimately with Kṛṣṇa (6.47), become free from doubt (7.1), remember Kṛṣṇa (8.14), find relief from miseries (9.1), and be joyful (9.2).

Henry David Thoreau wrote, "I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor," and when I understood the magic of hearing about Kṛṣṇa, I began to understand how I could elevate my life by conscious endeavor. Hearing destroys the darkness of ignorance (10.11) and lets us understand Kṛṣṇa's glories (11.2). In this way we become Kṛṣṇa's instrument (11.33) and see Kṛṣṇa face to face (11.54). We attain great faith (12.2), naturally follow *bhakti's* rules and regulations (12.9), and become dear to Kṛṣṇa (12.20). Pure hearing allows us to transcend birth and death (13.26) and surrender fully to Kṛṣṇa (18.66).

On an early-morning walk, disciples delight in hearing Śrīla Prabhupāda speak informally on a Kṛṣṇa conscious topic.



From *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.18.10):

“Those who are desirous of achieving complete perfection in life must submissively hear all topics that are connected with the transcendental activities and qualities of the Personality of Godhead, who acts wonderfully.

“PURPORT: The systematic hearing of the transcendental activities, qualities, and names of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa pushes one towards eternal life. Systematic hearing means knowing Him gradually in truth and fact, and this knowing Him in truth and fact means attaining eternal life. . . .

“Hearing about Kṛṣṇa is incredibly potent because it pleases Him, and when He’s pleased, our lives are successful.”

As Śrīla Prabhupāda would say, “What more could you want?”

The *Bhāgavatam* says that to gain affinity for hearing the messages of Kṛṣṇa, we must serve devotees completely freed from vice.

What Aspects of Kṛṣṇa Shall We Hear About?

While traveling around India in my early twenties, occasionally I came across huge crowds hearing Bhagavat Saptaha, a seven-day recital of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* They weren’t hearing all eighteen thousand verses of the *Bhāgavatam,* however, but only selected chapters of the Tenth Canto. I didn’t know what to make of this until later when I heard Śrīla Prabhupāda explain that if we’re hearing about Kṛṣṇa for our own entertainment or titillation, we’ll skip the early *Bhāgavatam* cantos where Śukadeva Gosvāmī describes the creation and dissolution of the material world and instead hear from the Tenth Canto of Kṛṣṇa’s intimate pastimes with His associates. Vaiṣṇava teachers don’t approve of this. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

“Those who are not completely free from the clutches of the Lord’s external energy should devoutly hear regularly about the activities of the Lord in relation with the external energy. They should not foolishly jump up to the activities of the internal energy, falsely attracted by the Lord’s internal potential activities like His *rāsa-līlā.* . . .

“A pure devotee knows that there is no difference between the pastimes of the Lord, either in *rāsa-līlā* or in creation, maintenance, or destruction of the material world. . . . The conditioned souls, therefore, must hear with appreciation and devotion the Lord’s pastimes in relationship with the external energy, and such acts are as good as the hearing of *rāsa-līlā* in the liberated stage.” (*Bhāgavatam* 2.7.53, Purport)

Who Should Hear?

When I came in contact with Śrīla Prabhupāda and his followers, I was an atheist and, as I was deeply skeptical, sometimes wondered if I was qualified to hear about Kṛṣṇa. Prabhupāda explained that the scriptures cast a broad net when they describe those who are qualified to hear about God and His devotees. Included are those people who are impious but curious about spiritual life; are pious, distressed, inquisitive, or wise; are receptive and have respect for the message and messenger; want to attain life’s goal; and are surrendered and render loving service to guru and Kṛṣṇa. Even those who want wealth, reputation, enjoyment, liberation, greatness, influence, or prowess are eligible to hear, for ultimately it is Kṛṣṇa who gives or withholds these things. And by hearing about Him, our desire for all temporary gains gradually decreases.

Whom Shall We Hear From?

I was qualified to hear about Kṛṣṇa, but who was qualified to speak about Him? The scriptures offer a short but definitive description of the speakers’ qualifications. They must follow Kṛṣṇa’s teachings and be part of a bona fide line of disciplic succession (*paramparā*). This means that they have taken shelter of Kṛṣṇa, have dedicated their lives to working for Him, and feel themselves completely dependent on Him. It became clear to me that Śrīla Prabhu-pāda and his sincere followers were qualified speakers.

How Should We Hear?

Once I understood the importance of hearing, what to hear about, and whom to hear from, the next question was how should I hear? What’s the correct attitude to hear with? I learned that to hear properly wasn’t easy. I needed to hear with:

Attention
Humility
Sincerity
Seriousness
Curiosity
Eagerness
Patience
Gratitude
Thoughtfulness
Persistence
Respect saturated with affection
Great and abiding faith
Unalloyed love for Kṛṣṇa
A service attitude

The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (1.2.16) says that to gain affinity for hearing the messages of Kṛṣṇa, we must serve devotees completely freed from vice.

And from Śrīla Prabhupāda: “One should hear with rapt attention from the real person, and then he can at once realize the presence of Lord Kṛṣṇa on every page [of the *Bhāgavatam*]. . . . No one can give rapt attention who is not pure in mind. No one can be pure in mind who is not pure in action. No one can be pure in action who is not pure in eating, sleeping, fearing, and mating. But somehow or other if someone hears with rapt attention from the right person, at the very beginning one can assuredly see Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in person in the pages of *Bhāgavatam."* (1.3.44, Purport)

In other words, we hear about Kṛṣṇa in the association of His devotees, and as we become absorbed in hearing about Him, we absorb His transcendental message, which is identical to Him. I was lacking the qualities needed to hear properly, but simply by trying to hear, I could acquire those qualities. My eagerness, a product of my budding knowledge and faith, was my qualification.

Why Is Hearing Effective?

All this made sense to me, and I felt the positive effects of hearing from Śrīla Prabhupāda and following what he said. Then one day I read in the *Bhāgavatam* (10.87.1) that Parīkṣit Mahārāja asked Śukadeva Gosvāmī how, since the mind is material and the vibration of words is material sound, can we approach Kṛṣṇa, who transcends everything material, by hearing about Him? Hmm. That's a great question, I thought. I had no idea what the answer was.

I read on and understood that by Kṛṣṇa's exceptional grace, His words in the scriptures are identical to Him. So sincere seekers approach Him by hearing from the bona fide scriptures.

nāma cintāmaṇiḥ kṛṣṇaś
caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ
pūrṇaḥ śuddho nitya-mukto
'bhinnatvān nāma-nāminoḥ

"The holy name of Kṛṣṇa bestows all spiritual benedictions for it is Kṛṣṇa Himself, the reservoir of all pleasure. Kṛṣṇa's name is not material under any condition, and it is no less powerful than Kṛṣṇa Himself. Kṛṣṇa's name is always liberated and spiritual; it is never conditioned by the laws of material nature. This is because the name of Kṛṣṇa and Kṛṣṇa Himself are identical." (*Padma Purāṇa*)

And from Lord Brahmā in the *Bhāgavatam (*3.9.11): "O my Lord, Your devotees can see You through the ears by the process of bona fide hearing, and thus their hearts become cleansed, and You take Your seat there. You are so merciful to Your devotees that You manifest Yourself in the particular eternal form of transcendence in which they always think of You."

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura writes in his commentary on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.87.2 that Kṛṣṇa inspired material nature to evolve ether and sound so that we can hear about Him; thus we have access to Kṛṣṇa only by His mercy.

The Result of Hearing About Kṛṣṇa

The desire to hear about Kṛṣṇa is an inconceivable blessing. By hearing, we can realize Kṛṣṇa's beauty, see all things in relation to Him, and so see all things as beautiful and sacred. Our lives become more animated, vivid, joyous, and worthy of us. By hearing about Kṛṣṇa we deliberate on Him and are so moved by His unprecedented personality that our mundane problems subside.

Kṛṣṇa is so beautiful that when we hear about Him we are inspired to share what we've heard with others, to preserve that knowledge, to grow from it, to become renewed by it, and to relish its limitlessness.

We begin to long for Kṛṣṇa. And in longing for Him we become more beautiful and ever closer to Him. Simply by hearing, we can conquer the unconquerable Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Viśākhā Devī Dāsī has been contributing articles and photographs to BTG for almost forty years. She and her husband, Yaduvara Dāsa, have lived at Saranagati Village, a Hare Kṛṣṇa community in British Columbia, Canada, since 1999. For more information, visit her website: http://our-spiritual-journey.com.

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SPEAKS OUT

(*continued from page 33*)

enjoyment. The tiger is busy. The hog is busy. The dog is busy. And if a man also becomes busy for sense enjoyment like the tigers and hogs and dogs, then in his next life he may become one of those species of life.

Priest: When one reaches a higher stage of activity, when he really loves all mankind?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That is a concoction—mental speculation. Why should you love only mankind? Why not love the tigers, the dogs, and all other species of life?

Priest: Because human beings are my brothers and sisters.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: But the tigers and dogs are also your brothers and sisters, because you all have a common father—God. Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* [5.18],

vidyā-vinaya-sampanne
brāhmaṇe gavi hastini
śuni caiva śva-pāke ca
paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ

Priest: What does that mean?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: That a truly learned man sees every living being with equal vision. In other words, he doesn't make any spiritual distinction between you and a dog. You have a soul that is covered by a human body, and a dog has a soul covered by a dog's body. But both of you are souls—part and parcel of God.

Priest: Would you say that souls are of different values?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, all souls are of the same value.

Priest: That I find hard to accept, because, as I understand it, the soul of man is immortal but the soul of an animal is not. An animal's "soul" is not really a soul at all but a principle of life, something Aristotle called a psyche. Therefore, man has higher value than the animals.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, spiritually they are of equal value, although materially their bodies may be of different gradations. It is just like the different gradations of motorcars. A man sitting in a Rolls Royce thinks he is very important, and a man sitting in a Ford or Chevrolet thinks he is poor. But as men both of them are equal. Similarly, the body of a human being and the body of a dog are just different machines, but the souls are of the same quality—part and parcel of the Supreme Soul, Kṛṣṇa.

Priest: That is hard to understand—that my soul and your soul are part of the Supreme Soul—because the Supreme Soul is infinite and we are finite. Therefore we cannot, added up together, make God.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, I don't say that. We are finite, and God is infinite. If all souls were combined together, they would still be finite, not infinite. Ninety billion zeroes cannot make one. So, I don't say that combined together we shall be equal to God. But the quality of God is there in all souls. God is like the vast ocean, and we are like drops of ocean water. The drops contain the same chemicals as the vast ocean, but in minute degree.

Priest: So we have God's qualities in imitation.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Not imitation. Actually, all souls do have God's qualities, just as a particle of gold has the same qualities as the gold in the mine. A small fragment of gold is certainly gold, but it is not equal to all the gold in the gold mine. So our philosophy is *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva,* "the inconceivable simultaneous oneness and difference of God and His energies." In other words, we are one with God in quality but different from Him in quantity.

God has creative power, and we also have creative power. But God has created millions of planets that float in space, and we have created the 747 that floats in the air. Yet we want to take more credit.

Priest: That is the sin of pride.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: Yes, that is false pride. Modern scientists are taking false pride in their accomplishments and saying there is no need of God—"There is no God. We can do everything." This is their foolishness. ❁

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BOOK SECTION: ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM

Referred to as "the ripe fruit of the tree of Vedic literature," *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the most complete and authoritative exposition of Vedic knowledge. Five thousand years ago the great sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa composed this *purāṇa,* or history, to explain the essence of spiritual knowledge. Here we present *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in serialized form, with the original Sanskrit text, transliteration, word meanings, translation, and purports by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, founder-*ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

ANGER, THE ENEMY OF SPIRITUAL REALIZATION

Manu gives philosophical instruction to Dhruva Mahārāja to help him give up his anger toward the Yakṣas.

CANTO 4: CHAPTER 11

26 एष भूतानि भूतात्मा भूतेशो भूतभावनः
स्वशक्त्या मायया युक्तः सृजत्यत्ति च पाति च

eṣa bhūtāni bhūtātmā
bhūteśo bhūta-bhāvanaḥ
sva-śaktyā māyayā yuktaḥ
sṛjaty atti ca pāti ca

eṣaḥ—this; *bhūtāni*—all created beings; *bhūta-ātmā*—the Supersoul of all living entities; *bhūta-īśaḥ*—the controller of everyone; *bhūta-bhāvanaḥ*—the maintainer of everyone; *sva-śaktyā*—through His energy; *māyayā*—the external energy; *yuktaḥ*—through such agency; *sṛjati*—creates; *atti*—annihilates; *ca*—and; *pāti*—maintains; *ca*—and.

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the Supersoul of all living entities. He is the controller and maintainer of everyone; through the agency of His external energy, He creates, maintains, and annihilates everyone.

PURPORT: There are two kinds of energies in the matter of creation. The Lord creates this material world through His external, material energy, whereas the spiritual world is a manifestation of His internal energy. ① He is always associated with the internal energy, but He is always aloof from the material energy. Therefore in *Bhagavad-gītā* (9.4) the Lord says, *mat-sthāni sarva-bhūtāni na cāhaṁ teṣv avasthitaḥ:* "All living entities are living on Me or on My energy, but I am not everywhere." He is personally always situated in the spiritual world. In the material world also, wherever the Supreme Lord is personally present is to be understood as being the spiritual world. ② For example, the Lord is worshiped in the temple by pure devotees. The temple is therefore to be understood as being the spiritual world.

(1) What is the Lord's relationship with His two main energies?
(2) Why is a temple considered the spiritual world?

27 तमेव मृत्युममृतं तात दैवं
सर्वात्मनोपेहि जगत्परायणम्
यस्मै बलिं विश्वसृजो हरन्ति
गावो यथा वै नसि दामयन्त्रिताः

tam eva mṛtyum amṛtaṁ tāta daivaṁ
sarvātmanopehi jagat-parāyaṇam
yasmai baliṁ viśva-sṛjo haranti
gāvo yathā vai nasi dāma-yantritāḥ

tam—unto Him; *eva*—certainly; *mṛtyum*—death; *amṛtam*—immortality; *tāta*—my dear son; *daivam*—the Supreme; *sarva-ātmanā*—in all respects; *upehi*—surrender; *jagat*—of the world; *parāyaṇam*—ultimate goal; *yasmai*—unto whom; *balim*—offerings; *viśva-sṛjaḥ*—all the demigods like Brahmā; *haranti*—bear; *gāvaḥ*—bulls; *yathā*—as; *vai*—without fail; *nasi*—in the nose; *dāma*—by a rope; *yantritāḥ*—controlled.

My dear boy Dhruva, please surrender unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the ultimate goal of the progress of the world. Everyone, including the demigods headed by Lord Brahmā, is working under His control, just as a bull, prompted by a rope in its nose, is controlled by its owner.

PURPORT: ③ The material disease is to declare independence from the supreme controller. ④ Factually, our material existence begins when we forget the supreme controller and wish to lord it over material nature. Everyone in the material world is trying his best to become the supreme controller—individually, nationally, socially, and in many other ways. Dhruva Mahārāja was advised to stop fighting by his grandfather, who was concerned that Dhruva was adhering to a personal ambition to fight to annihilate the whole race of Yakṣas. In this verse, therefore, Svāyambhuva Manu seeks to eradicate the last tinge of false ambition in Dhruva by explaining the position of the supreme controller.

The words *mṛtyum amṛtam,* "death and immortality," are significant. In *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord says, "I am ultimate death, who takes away everything from the demons." The demons' business is to continually struggle for existence as lords over material nature. The demons repeatedly meet death after death and create a network of involvement in the material world. The Lord is death for the demons, but for devotees He is *amṛta,* eternal life. ⑤ Devotees who render continuous service to the Lord have already attained immortality, for whatever they are doing in this life they will continue to do in the next. They will simply change their material bodies for spiritual bodies. Unlike the demons, they no longer have to change material bodies. The Lord, therefore, is simultaneously death and immortality. He is death for demons and immortality for devotees. He is the ultimate goal of everyone because He is the cause of all causes. Dhruva Mahārāja was advised to surrender unto Him in all respects, without keeping any personal ambition.

(3) What is "the material disease"?
(4) How does our material existence begin?
(5) Why have devotees who render continuous service to the Lord already attained immortality?
(6) Why was Manu proud that Dhruva Mahārāja was one of the descendants in his family?
(7) What is the Sanskrit word for man and what does it mean?

One may put forward the argument, "Why are the demigods worshiped?" The answer is given here that demigods are worshiped by less intelligent men. The demigods themselves accept sacrifices for the ultimate satisfaction of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

28 यः पञ्चवर्षो जननीं त्वं विहाय
मातुः सपत्न्या वचसा भिन्नमर्मा
वनं गतस्तपसा प्रत्यगक्ष-
माराध्य लेभे मूर्ध्नि पदं त्रिलोक्याः

yaḥ pañca-varṣo jananīṁ tvaṁ vihāya
mātuḥ sapatnyā vacasā bhinna-marmā
vanaṁ gatas tapasā pratyag-akṣam
ārādhya lebhe mūrdhni padaṁ tri-lokyāḥ

yaḥ—one who; *pañca-varṣaḥ*—five years old; *jananīm*—mother; *tvam*—you; *vihāya*—leaving aside; *mātuḥ*—of the mother; *sa-patnyāḥ*—of the co-wife; *vacasā*—by the words; *bhinna-marmā*—aggrieved at heart; *vanam*—to the forest; *gataḥ*—went; *tapasā*—by austerity; *pratyak-akṣam*—the Supreme Lord; *ārādhya*—worshiping; *lebhe*—achieved; *mūrdhni*—on the top; *padam*—the position; *tri-lokyāḥ*—of the three worlds.

My dear Dhruva, at the age of only five years you were very grievously afflicted by the words of your mother's co-wife, and you very boldly gave up the protection of your mother and went to the forest to engage in the yogic process for realization of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As a result of this you have already achieved the topmost position in all the three worlds.

PURPORT: ⑥ Manu was very proud that Dhruva Mahārāja was one of the descendants in his family because at the age of only five years Dhruva began meditating upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead and within six months he was able to see the Supreme Lord face to face. Factually, Dhruva Mahārāja is the glory of the Manu dynasty, or the human family. The human family begins from Manu. ⑦ The Sanskrit word for man is *manuṣya,* which means "descendant of Manu." Not only is Dhruva Mahārāja the glory of the family of Svāyambhuva Manu, but he is the glory of the entire human society. Because Dhruva Mahārāja had already surrendered to the Supreme Godhead, he was especially requested not to do anything unbefitting a surrendered soul.

29

तमेनमङ्गात्मनि मुक्तविग्रहे
व्यपाश्रितं निर्गुणमेकमक्षरम्
आत्मानमन्विच्छ विमुक्तमात्मदृग्
यस्मिन्निदं भेदमसत्प्रतीयते

tam enam aṅgātmani mukta-vigrahe
vyapāśritaṁ nirguṇam ekam akṣaram
ātmānam anviccha vimuktam ātma-dṛg
yasminn idaṁ bhedam asat pratīyate

tam—Him; *enam*—that; *aṅga*—my dear Dhruva; *ātmani*—in the mind; *mukta-vigrahe*—free from anger; *vyapāśritam*—situated; *nirguṇam*—transcendental; *ekam*—one; *akṣaram*—the infallible Brahman; *ātmānam*—the self; *anviccha*—try to find out; *vimuktam*—uncontaminated; *ātma-dṛk*—facing towards the Supersoul; *yasmin*—in which; *idam*—this; *bhedam*—differentiation; *asat*—unreal; *pratīyate*—appears to be.

My dear Dhruva, please, therefore, turn your attention to the Supreme Person, who is the infallible Brahman. Face the Supreme Personality of Godhead in your original position, and thus, by self-realization, you will find this material differentiation to be merely flickering.

PURPORT: The living entities have three kinds of vision, according to their positions in self-realization. According to the bodily concept of life, one sees differentiation in terms of varieties of bodies. The living entity actually passes through many varieties of material forms, but despite all such changes of body, he is eternal. When living entities, therefore, are viewed in the bodily concept of life, one appears to be different from another. Lord Manu wanted to change the vision of Dhruva Mahārāja, who was looking upon the Yakṣas as different from him or as his enemies. Factually no one is an enemy or a friend. Everyone is passing through different types of bodies under the law of karma, but as soon as one is situated in his spiritual identity, he does not see differentiation in terms of this law. In other words, as stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (18.54):

brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā
na śocati na kāṅkṣati
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu
mad-bhaktiṁ labhate parām

⑧ A devotee, who is already liberated, does not see differentiation in terms of the outward body; he sees all living entities as spirit souls, eternal servants of the Lord. Dhruva Mahārāja was advised by Lord Manu to see with that vision. He was specifically advised to do so because he was a great devotee and should not have looked upon other living entities with ordinary vision. Indirectly Manu pointed out to Dhruva Mahārāja that out of material affection Dhruva thought of his brother as his kin and the Yakṣas as his enemies. Such observation of differentiation subsides as soon as one is situated in his original position as an eternal servant of the Lord.

30

त्वं प्रत्यगात्मनि तदा भगवत्यनन्त
आनन्दमात्र उपपन्नसमस्तशक्तौ
भक्तिं विधाय परमां शनकैरविद्या-
ग्रन्थिं विभेत्स्यसि ममाहमिति प्ररूढम्

tvaṁ pratyag-ātmani tadā bhagavaty ananta
ānanda-mātra upapanna-samasta-śaktau
bhaktiṁ vidhāya paramāṁ śanakair avidyā-
granthiṁ vibhetsyasi mamāham iti prarūḍham

tvam—you; *pratyak-ātmani*—unto the Supersoul; *tadā*—at that time; *bhagavati*—unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead; *anante*—who is unlimited; *ānanda-mātre*—the reservoir of all pleasure; *upapanna*—possessed of; *samasta*—all; *śaktau*—potencies; *bhaktim*—devotional service; *vidhāya*—by rendering; *paramām*—supreme; *śanakaiḥ*—very soon; *avidyā*—of illusion; *granthim*—the knot; *vibhetsyasi*—you will undo; *mama*—my; *aham*—I; *iti*—thus; *prarūḍham*—firmly fixed.

Thus regaining your natural position and rendering service unto the Supreme Lord, who is the all-powerful reservoir of all pleasure and who lives in all living entities as the Supersoul, you will very soon forget the illusory understanding of "I" and "my."

PURPORT: ⑨ Dhruva Mahārāja was already a liberated person because at the age of five years he had seen the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But even though liberated, he was, for the time being, afflicted by the illusion of *māyā,* thinking himself the brother of Uttama in the bodily concept of life. The whole material world is working on the basis of "I" and "mine." This is the root of attraction to the material world. If one is attracted by this root of illusory conceptions—"I" and "mine"—he will have to remain within this material world in different exalted or nasty positions. By the grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the sages and

(8) With what vision was Dhruva Mahārāja advised by Lord Manu to see?
(9) Why was Dhruva Mahārāja already a liberated person?

Lord Manu reminded Dhruva Mahārāja that he should not continue this material conception of "I" and "mine." Simply by devotional service unto the Lord his illusion could be eradicated without difficulty.

31 संयच्छ रोषं भद्रं ते प्रतीपं श्रेयसां परम्
श्रुतेन भूयसा राजन्नगदेन यथामयम्

saṁyaccha roṣaṁ bhadraṁ te
pratīpaṁ śreyasāṁ param
śrutena bhūyasā rājann
agadena yathāmayam

saṁyaccha—just control; *roṣam*—anger; *bhadram*—all good fortune; *te*—to you; *pratīpam*—enemy; *śreyasām*—of all goodness; *param*—the foremost; *śrutena*—by hearing; *bhūyasā*—constantly; *rājan*—my dear King; *agadena*—by medicinal treatment; *yathā*—as; *āmayam*—disease.

My dear King, just consider what I have said to you, which will act as medicinal treatment upon disease. Control your anger, for anger is the foremost enemy on the path of spiritual realization. I wish all good fortune for you. Please follow my instructions.

PURPORT: Dhruva Mahārāja was a liberated soul, and actually he was not angry with anyone. ⑩ But because he was the ruler, it was his duty to become angry for some time in order to keep law and order in the state. His brother, Uttama, was without fault, yet he was killed by one of the Yakṣas. It was the duty of Dhruva Mahārāja to kill the offender (life for life) because Dhruva was the king. When the challenge came, Dhruva Mahārāja fought vehemently and punished the Yakṣas sufficiently. But anger is such that if one increases it, it increases unlimitedly. In order that Dhruva Mahārāja's kingly anger not exceed the limit, Manu was kind enough to check his grandson. Dhruva Mahārāja could understand the purpose of his grandfather, and he immediately stopped the fighting.

The words *śrutena bhūyasā,* "by constantly hearing," are very important in this verse. By constantly hearing about devotional service, one can check the force of anger, which is detrimental to the process of devotional service. ⑪ Śrīla Parīkṣit Mahārāja said that the constant hearing of the pastimes of the Lord is the panacea for all material diseases. Everyone, therefore, should hear about the Supreme Personality of Godhead constantly. By hearing one can always remain in equilibrium, and thus his progress in spiritual life will not be hampered.

(10) Why was it Dhruva Mahārāja's duty to be angry for some time?
(11) What has Śrīla Parīkṣit Mahārāja said is the panacea for all material diseases?
(12) What lesson is to be learned from Nārada's telling the snake to not bite but to expand its hoods?

Dhruva Mahārāja's becoming angry with the miscreants was quite appropriate. There is a short story in this connection about a snake who became a devotee upon instruction by Nārada, who instructed him not to bite anymore. Since ordinarily a snake's business is to fatally bite other living entities, as a devotee he was forbidden to do so. Unfortunately, people took advantage of this nonviolence on the part of the snake, especially the children, who began to throw stones at him. He did not bite anyone, however, because it was the instruction of his spiritual master. After a while, when the snake met his spiritual master, Nārada, he complained, "I have given up the bad habit of biting innocent living entities, but they are mistreating me by throwing stones at me." Upon hearing this, Nārada Muni instructed him, "Don't bite, but do not forget to expand your hood as if you were going to bite. Then they will go away." ⑫ Similarly, a devotee is always nonviolent; he is qualified with all good characteristics. But, in the common world, when there is mischief made by others, he should not forget to become angry, at least for the time being, in order to drive away the miscreants.

32 येनोपसृष्टात्पुरुषाल्लोक उद्विजते भृशम्
न बुधस्तद्वशं गच्छेदिच्छन्नभयमात्मनः

yenopasṛṣṭāt puruṣāl
loka udvijate bhṛśam
na budhas tad-vaśaṁ gacched
icchann abhayam ātmanaḥ

yena—by which; *upasṛṣṭāt*—being overwhelmed; *puruṣāt*—by the person; *lokaḥ*—everyone; *udvijate*—becomes terrified; *bhṛśam*—greatly; *na*—never; *budhaḥ*—a learned person; *tat*—of anger; *vaśam*—under the control; *gacchet*—should go; *icchan*—desiring; *abhayam*—fearlessness, liberation; *ātmanaḥ*—of the self.

A person who desires liberation from this material world should not fall under the control of anger because when bewildered by anger one becomes a source of dread for all others.

PURPORT: A devotee or saintly person should not be dreadful to others, nor should anyone be a source of dread to him. If one treats others with nonenmity, then no one will become his enemy. There is the example, however, of Jesus Christ, who had enemies, and they crucified him. The demonic are always present, and they find fault even in saintly persons. But a saintly person never becomes angry, even if there is very great provocation.

[*Continued in the next issue.*]

CALENDAR

*This calendar is calculated for Mayapur, West Bengal, India. The dates, derived from a lunar calendar, may vary by one day for other locations. For the exact dates for your area, go to **www.krishnadays.com**.*

Because the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement comes in disciplic line from Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the calendar includes not only dates relevant to all followers of the Vedic tradition but also dates relating to Lord Caitanya's associates and prominent spiritual masters in His disciplic succession.

April 7–May 6

(*Month of Madhusūdana*)

MAY

2—Mohinī Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

3—Rukmiṇī Dvādaśī, the appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Rukmiṇī Devī, the consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa as Dvārakādhīśa, the Lord of Dvārakā.

4—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Jayānanda Prabhu, a dedicated disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda who helped him bring the Rathayātrā festival to the Western world.

5—Nṛsiṁha Caturdaśī, appearance anniversary of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva, Lord Kṛṣṇa's half-man, half-lion incarnation. Fasting till dusk, followed by feasting.

6—Appearance anniversary of Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, a follower of the Six Gosvāmīs. Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, the spiritual master of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's spiritual master (Īśvara Purī).

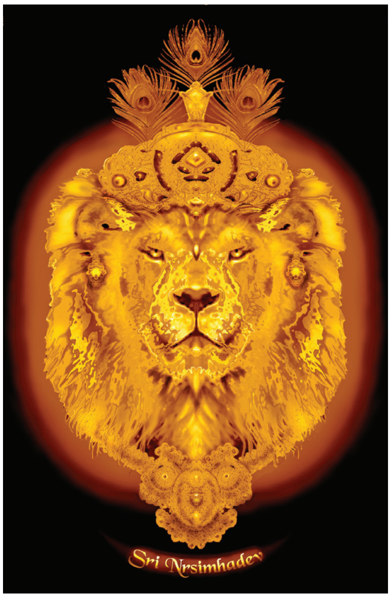
May 7–June 4

(*Month of Trivikrama*)

10—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Rāmānanda Rāya, an intimate associate of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

16—Aparā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

17—Appearance anniversary of Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura, the author of *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata,* a biography on Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.



Painting by Viṣṇu Dāsa

31—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, a prominent spiritual master in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* (disciplic succession from Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa), and the author of *Govinda-bhāṣya,* an important commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra.* Appearance anniversary of Śrīmatī Gaṅgāmātā Gosvāmiṇī, a prominent woman spiritual master in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya.*

JUNE

1—Trispṛśā Mahā-dvādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans for Pāṇḍava Nirjalā Ekādaśī.

June 5–July 3

(*Month of Vāmana*)

5—Disappearance of Śyāmānanda Paṇḍita, one of the principal followers of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vrindavan.

14—Disappearance anniversary of Śrī Śrīvāsa Paṇḍita, one of the principal associates of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

15—Yoginī Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

19—Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita, one of the principal associates of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Also, disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Fasting till noon, then feasting.

20—Guṇḍicā-mārjana: festival of cleansing the Gundicha temple in Jagannatha Puri, India.

21—Lord Jagannātha's Rathayātrā in Jagannatha Puri. Disappearance anniversary of Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara and Śrīla Śivānanda Sena, intimate associates of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

30—Śayanā Ekādaśī
Fasting from grains and beans.

JULY

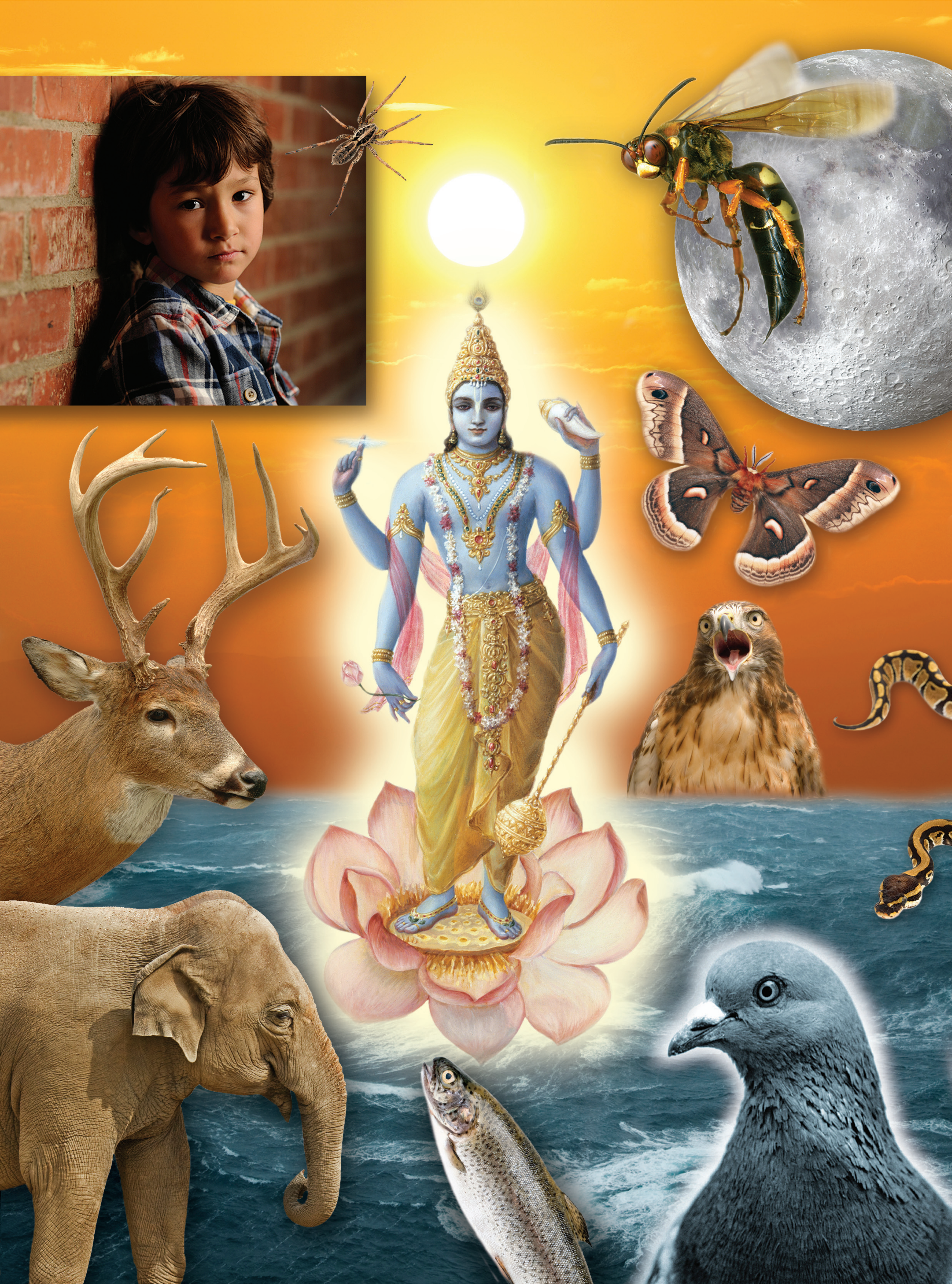
3—Disappearance anniversary of Sanātana Gosvāmī, one of the Six Gosvāmīs of Vrindavan. First month of Cāturmāsya begins (fasting from green leafy vegetables).

Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa,
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma,

PRONUNCIATION: ha-ray, krish-na, ra-ma (rhymes with "drama")

Yamarāja Dāsa

Hare Hare
Hare Hare



A WORLD OF GURUS

The Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam *introduces us to teachers we might expect, and to a few we might not.*

By Satyarāja Dāsa

HAVING WRITTEN about gurus in the last issue, ending with an analysis of how the five material elements can act as one's guru, I would like to elucidate the remaining nineteen of the traditional twenty-four gurus mentioned in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

The list of gurus given there is revealed by one King Yadu. The king knew a young renunciant, or *avadhūta,* who had given up all possessions and worldly responsibilities and had no fixed dwelling. Yadu observed that this unique young man, even though renounced, seemed filled peace and joy. And so Yadu asked him how this was so: "Why are you so happy despite having almost nothing?" The *avadhūta* responded by enumerating certain truths he had learned from things and people around him, which he called his gurus.

The Moon: After the five material elements, the *avadhūta's* sixth guru was the moon. The moon goes through various phases during its monthly cycle, but its fullness or darkness at the beginning or end of each fortnight is deceptive—the moon itself remains unchanged. Similarly, each of us is a spiritual being that essentially remains unchanged, despite the various permutations of the body.

The Sun: The sun evaporates large quantities of water with its potent rays and later releases the water to the earth as rain. The sun thus provides a lesson in detachment: We should not needlessly accumulate wealth but should use it to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Another lesson is that the sun is never divided or distorted even though its reflections in many objects make it appear so. Similarly,

Pigeon: Chris Inch; Sunset: Andreas Karelias; Ocean: June Cairns; Moon: parameter; Boy: Matthew Brown; Wasp: Rhett Stansbury; Spider: Judith Flacke; Snake: Ameng Wu; Fish: paci 77; Moth: Sebastien Cote; Bee: Antagain; Elephant: rusm; Hawk: Abdolhamid Ebrahimi; Deer: Lisa Hoop. All photos ©the photographers | istockphoto.com. Center painting of Paramātmā (Supersoul): Jagat Kāraṇa Devī Dāsī. Montage: Yamarāja Dāsa.

the soul is unaffected by the various bodies it shines through.

The Pigeon: The *avadhūta* next spoke of his eighth guru: a pigeon. After building a nest in a tree, the pigeon lived there with his mate for some years. The hearts of the two pigeons were bound together in every way. Naively trusting in the future, as lovers do, they enjoyed their lives as a couple, expecting many years together.

Eventually, the female pigeon became pregnant, and soon her nest filled with eggs. The two pigeons shared their love with their children, taking great pleasure in listening to their chirping. All was good.

We must be able to tolerate inconveniences without being disturbed, focusing our mind and attention on the Supreme.

Then one day the parents went out to find food for the children. During their absence, a hunter saw the little nest with the baby birds, spread his net over them, and captured them all.

When the adult pigeons returned, the distraught mother cried piteously and rushed toward her offspring. Her judgment compromised by grief, she became trapped as well.

Seeing the plight of his children and wife, who were as dear to him as life itself, the father pigeon lamented without control. The pain was so intense that he lost all will to live. Bewildered by the sight of his family struggling in the net to survive, he lost consciousness and fell into the hunter's grasp.

The *avadhūta* concludes from this story that too much material attachment leads to delusion and suffering. Life in this world is full of risk, and one's attainments will surely come to an end, for even the greatest of material pleasures—love, family, and so on—are temporary and limited, and a spiritual practitioner must constantly be aware of this.

The Python: The ninth guru was the python, which lies quietly for long periods without food. It does not search desperately, like other animals in the wild, but rather waits for its prey to come within range. If nothing appears, it can tolerate hunger. In a similar way, said the *avadhūta,* we must be able to tolerate inconveniences without being disturbed, focusing our mind and attention on the Supreme.

The Ocean: The ocean teaches us that one should not be disturbed by the thoughts and desires that consistently plague the mind. In the rainy season, rivers enter the ocean without raising its level. And in the dry season the ocean's level is not diminished. Similarly, a self-realized sage should remain balanced in all circumstances.

The Moth: The *avadhūta* observed that just as an alluring light draws a moth to meet its death, so do sense objects attract living beings to degradation and destruction.

The Honeybee: The bee goes from flower to flower, taking just a sample of what each has to offer. However, if the bee becomes greedy, enjoying too much honey, it risks being trapped when the sun sets and the flower's petals close.

Material life teaches a similar lesson. Sense gratification is like salt: Too much or too little spoils a food preparation. One must learn the art of taking just enough, and spending the balance of time for life's real purpose: self-realization.

The Elephant: The male elephant is defeated by his own desire. In India, wild male elephants were typically captured by using she-elephants to lure them into a hidden pit. The lesson here is that a renunciant influenced by attraction to the opposite sex will fall into the deep well of material life.

The Honey Gatherer: Although bees work hard to produce honey, someone may come and take it all. The lesson here is that renunciants are entitled to live by the hard-earned wealth of householders.

The Deer: Hunters sometimes play a flute or other musical instrument to attract and then kill a deer. Learning from this example, a person on the spiritual path should avoid mundane songs or gossip, which will distract one from the goal and lead to spiritual death.

The Fish: The fish sees the bait but not the hook. Of all the senses, the *avadhūta* tells us, the tongue is the most difficult to control, even tempting someone who has overcome the pull of the other senses. Therefore, Vaiṣṇava texts recommend controlling the tongue by chanting God's names and eating only *prasāda,* food first offered to Kṛṣṇa in sacrifice. In this way one can avoid the fate of the fish.

The Prostitute Piṅgalā: Next comes the story of Piṅgalā, the *avadhūta's* seventeenth guru. She is distinct among the *Bhāgavatam's* twenty-four teachers in that she teaches with words rather than mere example.

Piṅgalā lived in the ancient city of Videha, where she would stand in front of her house watching men as they passed by. Her motive: to determine whether they were prospective clients or not. "Does this fellow have money? That one looks wealthy. Will he be able to pay me?"

One night she found herself without a single customer and gradually lost hope that anyone would want her services. Morose and forlorn, she wondered, "How will I pay my bills? What if I'm no longer desirable and this dry spell continues for many days?"

All of a sudden, despite her anxiety she realized she was actually okay with the lack of business. She realized she was beginning to feel detachment, freedom, and even joy. Finally, she broke out into song. The lyrics, as conveyed in the *Bhāgavatam,* reveal the foolishness of prostitution, of sex desire, of the bodily concept of life. She sang of the temporary nature of material pleasure, of how she could now see all this, and of how she was finally privy to the mercy of the Lord.

The Hawk: The *avadhūta* then told the story of the hawk, or *kurara.* One day, a flock of hawks went in search of food, and one fortunate hawk caught a mouse. The other hawks were not so lucky, and so they flew after the first one, hoping to usurp his prize. When he saw what was happening, he dropped his prey to fly off and save his own life. In so doing, even though losing his food, he felt surprisingly peaceful. "Accumulation of material things leads to misery," said the *avadhūta.* "One who knows this becomes *akiñcana*—someone with the deep realization that nothing is truly his, for everything belongs to God."

The Innocent Child: The *avadhūta* said that like a child, he was free to wander the earth free of worry about wife, home, children, and so on. He could live the life of the soul and find love on the spiritual platform.

The Marriageable Daughter: A girl of marriageable age also played the role of a guru. One day, when she was home alone, several suitors came knocking at her door, making their intentions known. Since no one else was there, she herself had to greet them. Although she invited them in, she rushed off into the kitchen to prepare a meal for them. While there, her wrist bangles clanged loudly as she moved the pots and pans. Not wanting to disturb her guests or have them think she was a low-class woman who must cook for herself, she gradually removed her bangles one by one, leaving only one pair on each wrist. Nonetheless, when she cut vegetables, the bangles still made a harsh sound, so she slipped another off each wrist, leaving only one.

The *avadhūta* concluded that it is best to live alone. Spending too much time with crowds can distract one from spiritual life, and even one associate can still cause a disturbance. Those serious about the spiritual path, he concluded, live alone, or they live with others who are also serious about the path.

The Arrow Maker: The *avadhūta* once observed an arrow maker who was so absorbed in his work of sharpening arrows that he did not notice a parade passing by his workshop, even though it included a great king and much pomp and celebration. He was too focused to even raise his head. Similarly, says the *avadhūta,* a yogi should be so absorbed in the Self that he does not care for anything else going on around him.

The Snake: Here again we learn the importance of living alone, without any fixed home or dependence on anyone. The *avadhūta* said that snakes are happy to slither in and out of any residence without attachment. Spiritual practitioners should come and go with the same sense of detachment.

The Spider: The spider emits thread from its own body, creating a complex web, and then it draws the thread back into itself. Similarly, God creates the universe out of His own being, and when the work of creation is complete, He draws it back into Himself. Here the twenty-third guru teaches us something about the nature of God rather than about how we should live in

(*please turn to page 58*)

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After providing for their families and loved ones, subscribers may want to put *Back to Godhead* in their wills, thus helping to assure the long-term future of this work. In the USA, bequests are free of estate tax and can substantially reduce the amount of your assets claimed by the government.* You can give needed support for *Back to Godhead* by simply including the following words in your will: *I give, devise, and bequeath to* Back to Godhead, *18024 NW 112th Blvd., Alachua, FL 32615* (insert amount being given here) *to be used to support* Back to Godhead *and its related activities, including the Krishna.com website.*

A bequest can be a specific dollar amount, a specific piece of property, a percentage of an estate, or all or part of the residue of an estate. You can also name BTG as a contingency beneficiary in the event someone named in your will is no longer living. It is recommended that a lawyer help in drafting or amending a will.

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Hariprasad Chaurasia at Radhadesh museum opening

Radhanath Swami Embarks on North American Book Tour

MADHAVA SMULLEN | American-born spiritual teacher Radhanath Swami will set off on a North American book tour from August 1st to December 1st this year, to promote the US trade release of his autobiography The Journey Home.

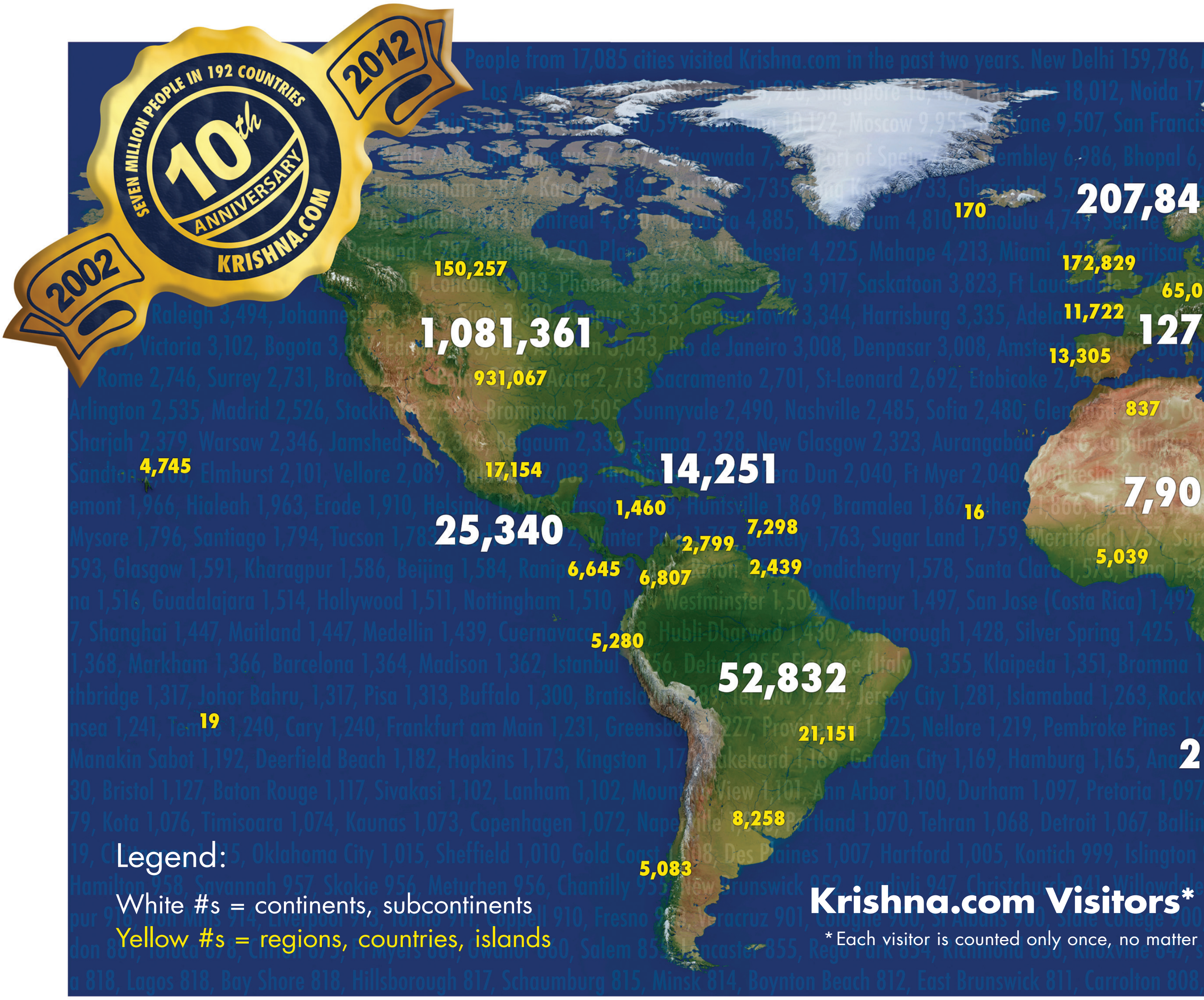
New Yorkers Go Dough Nuts for Prasadam

MADHAVA SMULLEN | A trendy New York purveyor of gourmet doughnuts clues us in on his most important ingredient: devotion to Krishna.

Temple Profile: Johannesburg, South Africa

MADHAVA SMULLEN | ISKCON's temple in Lenasia, a suburb of Johannesburg, is home to the Bhaktivedanta College of Education and Training, and to several active youth groups. But the beautiful Sri Sri Nitai Gaura-Hari, the oldest Deities in South Africa, remain the top reason to visit.

KRISHNA.CO

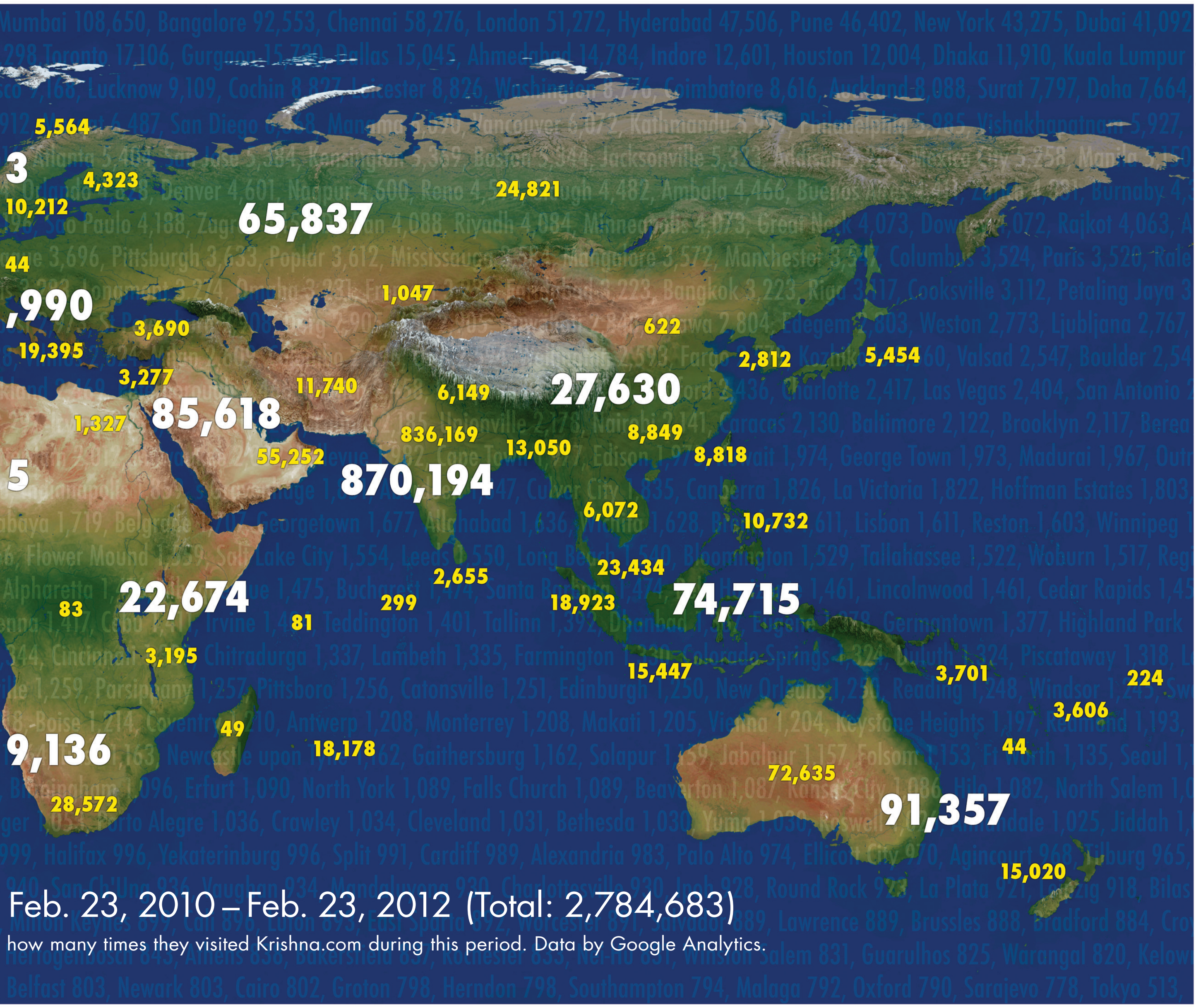

SEVEN MILLION PEOPLE IN 192 COUNTRIES
10th
ANNIVERSARY
KRISHNA.COM
2002
2012
170
207,84
150,257
172,829
65,0
11,722
1,081,361
127
13,305
931,067
837
4,745
17,154
14,251
7,90
1,460
16
25,340
7,298
2,799
5,039
6,645
6,807
2,439
5,280
52,832
19
21,151
2
8,258
5,083
Legend:
White #s = continents, subcontinents
Yellow #s = regions, countries, islands
Krishna.com Visitors*
* Each visitor is counted only once, no matter

Launched in 2002, Krishna.com—a website all about Kṛṣṇa—has become an indispensible spiritual resource for many people.

By Radha McClellan

In 2001, IF YOU had typed www.krishna.com into your web browser, you would have been taken to the website for *Back to Godhead* magazine. Back in the stone age of the Internet, Jayādvaita Swami, the BTG editor at the time, saw how important the web would be for offering Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the world. He bought the domain name www.krishna.com and after a few years started using it to promote the magazine. After some time, the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, desiring a robust website to promote Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and teachings, teamed up with BTG to develop Krishna.com. The BBT committed funding, and BTG took responsibility for building the website.

M TURNS 10


5,564
3
4,323
10,212
24,821
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44
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,990
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622
19,395
2,812
5,454
3,277
11,740
6,149
27,630
1,327
85,618
836,169
8,849
55,252
13,050
8,818
5
870,194
6,072
10,732
2,655
23,434
83
22,674
299
18,923
74,715
81
3,195
15,447
3,701
224
3,606
49
9,136
18,178
44
72,635
28,572
91,357
15,020

Feb. 23, 2010 – Feb. 23, 2012 (Total: 2,784,683)

how many times they visited Krishna.com during this period. Data by Google Analytics.

Worldmap: ©Vhcreative | Dreamstime.com

Yamarāja Dāsa

The world map above shows the number of unique visitors to Krishna.com for two years. At left, Uddhava Dāsa operates the video camera while Caturātma Dāsa speaks to the Krishna.com audience about a Vaiṣṇava saint.

Prāṇadā Dāsī and Tāmraparṇi Dāsa, both from BTG, and Manu and I, both ISKCON second generation, met in a small back room at BTG to plan the new site. We talked about technology, visitors, readers, books, pictures, and software. We got excited about what we could do with the project and made notes about our vision. We had a fantastic shared sense of the site's potential, as if Kṛṣṇa Himself was watching over us, waiting to see what we would make of the opportunity He was giving us.

Manu and I were to be the daily workers, and Prāṇadā and Tāmraparṇi came in for vision and planning meetings and to look at what we were building. We had to invent the website from the ground up. We decided we would make Krishna.com inclusive rather than exclusive. Anyone with a hint of interest in Kṛṣṇa consciousness should feel welcome. We had to look at everything we did with a careful eye to make sure we were talking clearly to people who had never heard of Sanskrit. We had to explain the art we used with the "blue boy" in it. We had to design the site to look clean and open and neutral so spiritual seekers would feel comfortable to look around and ask questions.

Over the years, the appearance of the site has changed at least a dozen times. The logo, the home page, the navigation buttons, the menu options, the features and services, even the people working and volunteering for Krishna.com—all have changed. But the message has stayed the same. Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings about Kṛṣṇa consciousness are the core of Krishna.com's identity.

Gaura Pūrṇimā 2002

After six months of agonizing over colors, fonts, logos, tag lines, software, articles, pictures, features, and a thousand other things, we were finally able to turn off the site dedicated to *Back to Godhead* magazine and turn on the site all about Kṛṣṇa. We gathered in the office, and Manu launched the new Krishna.com. After an hour, he logged into the site's traffic-counting program. We smile to think of it now, but we were excited then. Six people in only an hour! At that rate the site might get a few thousand visitors a month!

We knew we'd have to work twice as fast to put up more content, more articles, more pictures, more books, more ways for visitors to learn about Kṛṣṇa. And now that we had a live website, we had to do it right away.

Gaura Pūrṇimā 2012

Some things haven't changed at Krishna.com all that much. The gallery of Kṛṣṇa conscious paintings is still one of the most popular parts of the site. People still download and read free PDFs of Śrīla Prabhupāda's books. Visitors still email us from around the world asking about Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, how to find their local temple, when the next Ekādaśī is, where to find a certain book.

With the rise of the Internet as the new social forum, Krishna.com has become a public reading room for Śrīla Prabhupāda's books; an art gallery of paintings of Kṛṣṇa and His avatars and pastimes; a virtual temple for those who live far from temples or for other reasons can't visit a temple regularly; a courtyard

Yamarāja Dāsa

The Rising Moon of
MAYAPUR

BTG designer Yamarāja Dāsa (at left in the photo at right) and editor Nāgarāja Dāsa confer about an article in production. At left (clockwise from upper left): Krishna.com customer service members Śālagrāma Śilā Devī Dāsī, Radhika Priya Haberland, and her sister Tāralakṣī Devī Dāsī.

for people who have been practicing *bhakti-yoga* for decades to discuss philosophy and spiritual life with new visitors interested in Kṛṣṇa; a place to pay homage to and read about Śrīla Prabhupāda, the teacher and activist who brought Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the Western world; a media complex for vintage, classic, and new video and audio of lectures, *kīrtanas,* documentaries, and books.

Krishna.com has become so vast it's sometimes hard to find one's way around. So we've started making little planets within the universe. One of our newest planets is kirtan.krishna.com, a community for sharing *bhajanas* and *kīrtanas* recorded live at events around the world. Food.krishna.com is our cooking community. And btg.krishna.com hosts *Back to Godhead* magazine, including bonus online-only features. Prabhupāda.krishna.com is the place for everything about Śrīla Prabhupāda's life and teachings. Directory.krishna.com (ISKCON Temple Directory) and links.krishna.com (Links Community) help visitors find their way to related material off the Krishna.com website.

We're bringing Krishna.com directly to the Internet streets wherever we can. We're on Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and Tumblr. Our mailing list numbers thousands of people asking to receive newsletters and e-mailings on Krishna Meditations, daily e-book readings, updates on the site and store, information on BTG magazine, alerts for live shows or temple webcams, and more. In our Connect community, people create profiles and share with other Kṛṣṇa conscious people. And for visitors with specific questions, volunteers man our Live Help system for live chat or in-depth email responses.

We're adding interactive features throughout the site, inviting readers and visitors to rate and comment on just about everything. Krishna.com isn't just what we publish to the site; it's also about the people who visit and use the site.

Second-Gens Take Over

At the beginning of 2009, both of our senior managers, Tāmraparṇi and Prāṇadā, had to step away from managing Krishna.com. Manu and I, along with the head of our web department, Uddhava, took over running the project. This seemed like a natural development for us, but we realized that Krishna.com was the first major ISKCON project managed entirely by ISKCON's second generation. We were under pressure to prove we could handle the task. Would Krishna.com maintain the integrity of spiritual wisdom Śrīla Prabhupāda had taught and his disciples had sincerely continued? To ensure this, we always consulted a wide network of advisors, teachers, preachers, writers, scholars, and specialists. Our core goal has always been to offer Kṛṣṇa consciousness as Śrīla Prabhupāda taught it.

A lot of people visit Krishna.com today. We've been so busy these last ten years that we've hardly had a chance to look up and see the results of our labor. I see the numbers and the locations of our visitors. I read the emails. I look at the lists of people in our mailing software. I'm happy with the progress. And it becomes so much more real when someone visits us in person and tells us how her life was immeasurably altered because of our actions.

Dear Krishna.com . . .

"I believe that Krishna.com is a very efficient approach to spreading Krishna consciousness. It is a reliable source of things favorable for cultivation of the spiritual knowledge of Krishna consciousness. I like the easy access to information about Krishna and His devotees. As a source of information, online books, videos, music, and art, Krishna.com has significant impact on my life as an aspiring devotee. When I wish to know something more about Krishna, I just go on Krishna.com pages."

Milan Tatalović, 32
Windisch, Switzerland

"I think my testimony would be the most shocking. I am the bishop of the Christian Church. I love Jesus Christ and Lord Krishna. I have been practicing the maha-mantra. Each month, I always send donations to various Vaishnava clubs, meetings, churches. I like your web project. In April 2012 I'm going to India for 45 days to visit the holy places."

Bishop Dr. Taras S. Shevchenko
Kyiv, Ukraine

"Hare Krishna. I am the singer in a hardcore band called Next Step Up and I also have an office job. I have a very busy job and family life and I don't have the chance to get to the temple as often as I should like. Every day I receive from Krishna.com an excerpt from Bhagavad-gita that I read each morning before I start work. It really helps me to keep life and work in perspective and helps me remember the true goal in this human life. Krishna.com has made it easier for me to keep engaged in the ISKCON movement and helps to remind me to be 'in this world, but not of this world.' I travel a lot with my band, although not as much as I would like, and I try to keep this message of positivity and detachment from material possessions when meeting new fans around the world. You are doing a great job so far! Please keep it up! See attached band photo—I'm in the white hat."

JR, 42
Baltimore, Maryland

"My first encounter with Krishna.com was as a 13-year-old doing a very general research project on the Hare Krishna movement. At this point in my life I hadn't had any exposure to Eastern culture, but I had heard of the Hare Krishnas through their association with George Harrison. An internet search quickly brought me to Krishna.com, where not only did I find a wealth of knowledge but also helpful devotees in forums and live chat who were extremely willing to answer my questions and served as inspiration for my ensuing personal journey into Krishna consciousness.

A very nice devotee I met through the forums sent me my first Back to Godhead, japa mala, and neck beads, only asking in return that I use them.

Ten years later, as an aspiring devotee, Krishna.com is still the first place I go when I have questions, concerns, need inspiration, or crave association."

Amanda Capezio, 23
Manchester, Pennsylvania

"I'm still kind of new to Krishna consciousness. I started to get into it around 2010 when I decided to become a vegetarian. The teachings have helped me become a better person. I know I have so much more to learn, but I try to live my life in a more spiritual way little by little.

I'm originally from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I don't live near a temple, but enjoy the videos and other content from members. Krishna.com is doing a good job. I'm a poet and writer, and working on my first novel.

One day, in Rio, devotees got on my bus and gave me a BTG magazine. It took one page to make me decide that

We didn't realize until recently that while we were busy working, people had started relying on Krishna.com for their spiritual life.

The Next Big Thing

We're still working in offices of the BTG building, a doublewide mobile home in a back pasture of the ISKCON property in Alachua, Florida. The Krishna.com staff has grown over the years, and now we're packed three or four to an office, bumping elbows and vying for electrical outlets. It's a cheerful group, though, and when our horrible rural Internet connection flickers on and off all day, making our tasks nearly impossible, the team rolls with the punches. I'm grateful for that. But it's time to move into town and find a more suitable building. That's a challenge we face at the moment. And we have to balance that challenge with the ongoing work needed to rewrite our entire "About Krishna" section, create a version of the site suited to smart phones and other mobile devices, and keep up with this was the way I wanted to connect with God. On the next days I came across many vendors selling Krishna articles, posters, books, and even someone came to the hospital where I used to work with a peacock feather to give to me. I had my first Mac and looked for Krishna on the web, and there He was, beautiful, playing His flute on Krishna.com. There was a button on the home page that you could click and hear Prabhupada chanting the Maha Mantra.

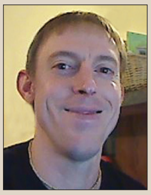
I moved to the US and here I am, always going to Krishna.com to read articles, order all items I need from books to clothing, subscribe to the BTG magazine, get recipes, listen to testimonials, and much more. I think all Krishna devotees should donate to the site, all over the world, to show that they appreciate having a place on the web that can help them on the Krishna consciousness road. After all, it is a site for all devotees, from East to West, North and South—just like Srila Prabhupada wanted. Thank you so much for all the joy you provide with this wonderful site.

I hope it will stand strong for the next ten thousand years."

Marina Hansen-Russo, 54
Edison, New Jersey

"As a devotee in a secular family, I have almost no contact at all with other devotees. I chant and read in private. Krishna.com is my portal to the spiritual world. Words cannot describe my gratitude. Therefore with this gratitude and humility, I would like to offer my obeisances to you all."

Tony Bate, 56
Company Director in Blackburn,
Northern England, UK



"Krishna.com has just a ton of information on so many topics. I always find something new. The teachings of Srila Prabhupada that Krishna.com provides have helped me become a better person. I wish Krishna.com continued success in spreading the word about Krishna consciousness."

Charlie Clouse, 35
Harrisonburg, Virginia

Photo by Staff Sgt. Aaron D. Allmon II, USAF

"I first read the Bhagavad-Gita six months ago, and it completely enlightened me and answered all of the questions that I have ever had throughout my life and my struggle with the Christian religion. I feel that everyone needs to experience Krishna consciousness and without it there is no possibility of true happiness. So I felt it my duty to Krishna to give and help Krishna.com to spread the word and help enlighten as many people as possible.

Krishna Consciousness is the most valuable thing in the world, and I would never trade it for anything. I am trying my best to enlighten anyone around me and it is spreading like fire.

I am a Navy Seal deployed to Iraq. I have two years left till I get out, and I can't wait for the day, but it doesn't matter because I just spend my time in Krishna consciousness, and everything is always perfect. Krishna has taken care of everything, and I have no complaints. I just feel so fortunate to have been given this chance to hear about Krishna. I am just now finishing the fourth canto of the Srimad-Bhagavatam and starting the fifth.

Anonomous, 23
Iraq

"[Krishna.com's "Teachings"] were the first teachings I had in Krishna consciousness. It was like a light bulb being turned on in my soul. I've directed many a curious person to them. I was a born-again, but not practicing, Christian when I discovered Krishna consciousness on your website in 2005. I quit my job and moved into the San Diego ISKCON temple in July of 2007. I joined my fiance, now husband, in India. We returned to the states in Nov. 2011, to Salt Lake City. I am a brahmana initiated devotee of HH Lokanath Maharaj. Your teachings gave me a great start in my devotional life. If these teachings had not laid out the philosophy so simply and understandably, I may not have taken to it so readily. Prabhupada gave us the Absolute Truth, and you are continuing in his effort to bring this information to everyone. Thank you."

Svayam Rasesvari Shutler
Salt Lake City, Utah

the next round of Internet and software upgrades just around the corner.

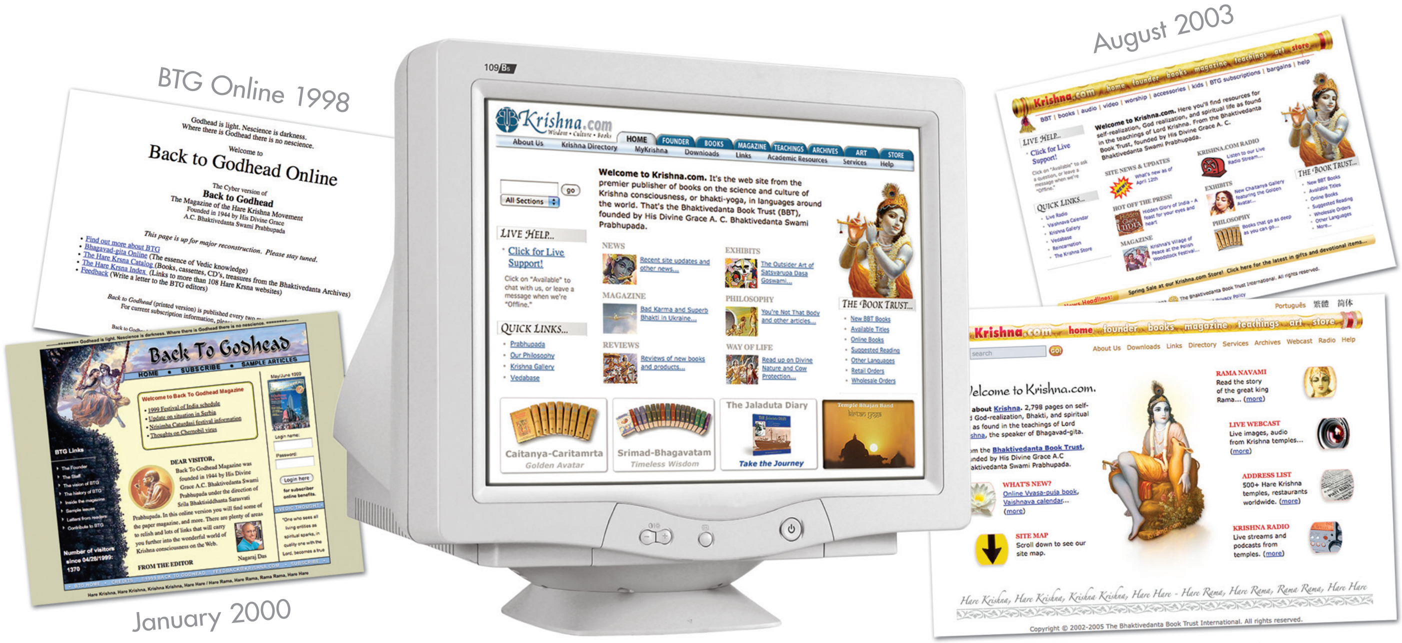
At least forty people contribute daily to the site. More than half are volunteers who donate their time because they also see the value of Krishna.com. Fortunately, they live around the world and don't need us to provide them office space.

The Krishna.com Store

Ten years ago the store at Krishna.com was a few pages in the printed and online editions of BTG magazine. Not a whole lot to it. You had to mail, email, or call in your order and payment information.

In the fall of 2002, we chose ecommerce software from a small start-up company and opened our first interactive online shop with four hundred items. Since then, that small software company has been bought by eBay and the software is being further developed to power eBay's small-business markets. So we have the benefits of a larger company developing the software we use.

Our original product line has


BTG Online 1998

Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness.
Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

Welcome to
Back to Godhead Online

The Cyber version of
Back to Godhead
The Magazine of the Hare Krishna Movement
Founded in 1944 by His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

This page is up for major reconstruction. Please stay tuned.

- Find out more about BTG
- Bhagavad-gita Online (The essence of Vedic knowledge)
- The Hare Krsna Catalog (Books, cassettes, CD's, treasures from the Bhaktivedanta Archives)
- The Hare Krsna Index (Links to more than 108 Hare Krsna websites)
- Feedback (Write a letter to the BTG editors)

Back to Godhead (printed version) is published every two
For current subscription information, please

January 2000

Godhead is light. Nescience is darkness. Where there is Godhead there is no nescience.

Welcome to Back To Godhead Magazine

- 1999 Festival of India schedule
- Update on situation in Serbia
- Nrisimha Caturdasi festival information
- Thoughts on Chernobil virus

DEAR VISITOR,
Back To Godhead Magazine was founded in 1944 by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada under the direction of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Prabhupada. In this online version you will find some of the paper magazine, and more. There are plenty of areas to relish and lots of links that will carry you further into the wonderful world of Krishna consciousness on the Web.

Nagaraj Das

FROM THE EDITOR

Number of visitors since 04/28/1999: 1370

"One who sees all living entities as spiritual sparks, in quality one with the Lord, becomes a true

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare

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Krishna.com Launch: March 2002

Welcome to Krishna.com. It's the web site from the premier publisher of books on the science and culture of Krishna consciousness, or bhakti-yoga, in languages around the world. That's the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT), founded by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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August 2003

Welcome to Krishna.com. Here you'll find resources for self-realization, God realization, and spiritual life as found in the teachings of Lord Krishna. From the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, founded by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

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Spring Sale at our Krishna.com Store! Click here for the latest in gifts and devotional items...

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November 2005

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about Krishna. 2,798 pages on self- God-realization, Bhakti, and spiritual as found in the teachings of Lord shna, the speaker of Bhagavad-gita.

m the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, nded by His Divine Grace A.C aktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare - Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare

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Live streams and podcasts from temples. (more)

grown to about eight thousand items. What was once a list of books, cassettes, videos, and a miscellaneous assortment of *japa* beads, Tulasī neck beads, and Kṛṣṇa-related toys, has grown to include devotional clothing of all kinds, deities and accessories for your home altar, a large selection of incense, and a whole lot more.

We started the store to create income for BTG and Krishna.com. Many of our long-time customers are pleasantly surprised when they find out that by shopping at the store, they are essentially making a donation.

Seeing the Benefits

Every once in a while I am rewarded with a reminder about why we're all doing this.

A man from Texas called, asking if we'd ever heard of this book with a blue guy on the cover, and possibly horses, by an old swami from India. Apparently, the caller's brother had received a copy of *Bhagavad-gītā As It Is* in the '70s after returning from Vietnam. Depressed and sometimes considering suicide, he had read the *Gītā* from cover to cover whenever he felt fragile. Now he had passed away, the book had been lost in the shuffle, and his brother was having a hard time and wanted his own copy of the *Gītā* to read.

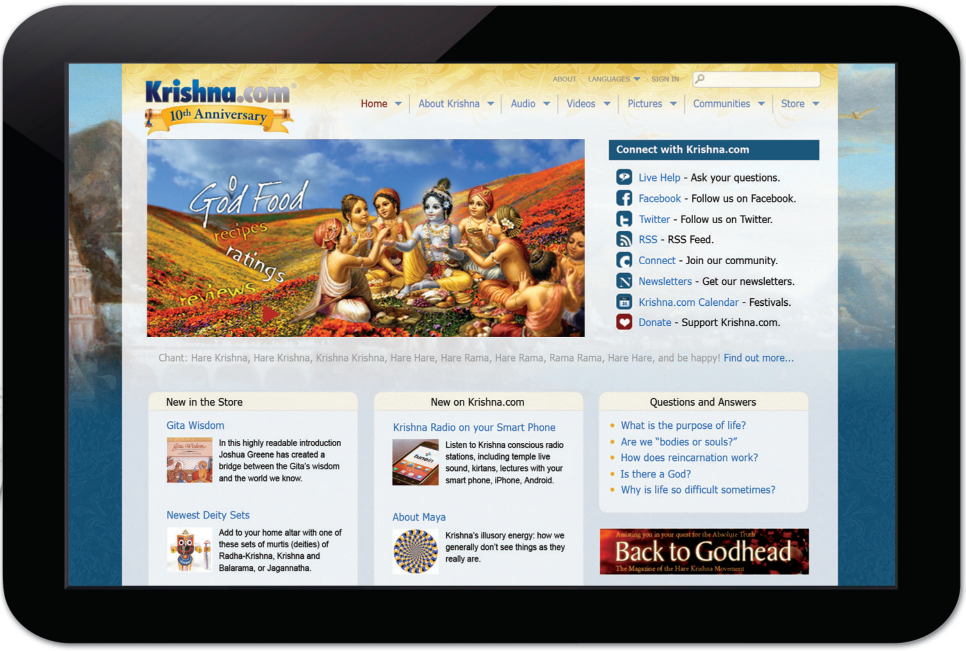
One woman had lived as a Hare Kṛṣṇa in the very early days but, disheartened in the '80s, had walked away from Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Now, with her first grandchild on the way, she was once again drawn to the big questions about life and God. On a whim she searched online for an old friend of hers from back when she was a devotee, and she somehow found Krishna.com. She peeked into the art gallery, tentatively checked out the temple webcams, and listened to a lecture by Śrīla Prabhupāda. Everything came flooding back to her, as if the spiritual journey of her youth had only temporarily been put on hold.

As I write this, I'm about to leave my peaceful home office and head into the BTG/Krishna.com offices. It's Monday, so I'll be especially busy. I'm sure I'll get to only a few items on my to-do list. It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of tasks that still need to be done. But I take on one project, then another, and another, and suddenly four months have zoomed by and we're launching another section of Krishna.com. It is never-ending, after all. A website all about Kṛṣṇa? That could take three hundred years and a staff of thousands. ❀

Yamarāja Dāsa

June 2007

September 2008



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March 2012

Darśana
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The changing face of the Krishna.com homepage, 2000–2012 (above). Below, office manager Vegavatī Devī Dāsī (far left), Radhika Priya, and shipping manager Ijya Dāsa prepare Krishna.com Store orders for shipping.

A WORLD OF GURUS

(*continued from page 49*)

the world, but the spider is also an example of detachment for us.

The Wasp: Once, a wasp trapped an insect in its lair. Out of intense fear, the insect took on the mentality of a wasp—for it could think only of its captor and nothing else—and thus it became a wasp in its next life. This teaches us that we attain our future births according to what we fix our minds upon.

Why These Twenty-Four?

After enumerating his list of twenty-four gurus, the *avadhūta* affirmed that he had another guru not previously mentioned, one that allowed him to learn from all the rest. That guru was his own body. “After many, many births and deaths,” he said, “one achieves the rare human form of life, which, although temporary, affords one the opportunity to attain the highest perfection. Thus a sober human being should quickly endeavor for the ultimate perfection of life as long as his body, which is always subject to death, has not fallen down and died. After all, sense gratification is available even in the most abominable species of life, whereas Kṛṣṇa consciousness is possible only for a human being.” (11.9.29)

After reading about the material elements, natural phenomena, and people that constitute these teachers, you might ask, “Why these twenty-four?” The answer is that these specific twenty-four gurus are examples of how an enlightened soul might see the world around him. The *avadhūta* came across these spiritual masters, but there can certainly be others. In fact, anyone or anything can serve as a guru if one sees legitimate spiritual lessons in them, under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master.

The *avadhūta* concludes his discourse thus: “Although the Absolute Truth is one without a second, the sages have described Him in many different ways. Therefore one may not be able to acquire very firm or complete knowledge from one spiritual master.” (11.9.31)

This is not to say that one must have more than one guru. Indeed, the scriptures declare that a practitioner should have only one initiating guru, even if he may have any number of instructing gurus. That being said, the initiating and instructing gurus are one in purpose. And, further, as we have seen, one may accept certain gurus in nature and from every aspect of life—but all are meant to bring us to the same conclusions, not different ones. They are all meant to bring us to proper Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta,* to ultimate reality.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, in his commentary on text 11.8.2, clarifies the matter further: “We can learn from the manifestations of nature,” he writes, “*when we see them as manifestations of the spiritual master.* [Italics added.] Nature is the creation of the Supreme Soul, who, through it, teaches us lessons about ultimate truth. In fact, only one who sees the guru in all things can truly function as a guru himself.”

Another important point to be drawn from the *avadhūta’s* teaching is the role that reason plays in our spiritual life, at both the beginning and the end. As the *avadhūta* himself said: “My dear King, with my intelligence I have taken shelter of many spiritual masters. Having gained transcendental understanding from them, I now wander about the earth in a liberated condition.” (11.7.32)

In the end, the *Bhāgavatam* asks all its readers to become liberated as well, by pursuing spiritual life in earnest under a qualified teacher.

Satyarāja Dāsa, a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda, is a BTG associate editor. He has written over twenty books on Kṛṣṇa consciousness and lives near New York City.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Awakening

IMAGINE WAKING UP one day in a foreign place with total amnesia. After the initial shock and a frightening period of adjustment, you decide to start a new life. But even though you've forgotten your past, it returns to haunt you. People with guns chase you in your car, someone breaks into your house and ransacks the place, and a note tacked to your front door says, "Did you think you'd get away with it?"

Your sense of urgency to uncover your identity would come alive: "I really need to find out who I am and why this is happening to me."

This amnesia is a metaphor for our life as human beings. We're born without knowing anything, including who we are, and we start suffering right away. The birth process itself is extremely traumatic. As children, we quickly learn that we're rewarded for being good and punished for being bad. We see a connection: "I suffer when I do bad things." But as we mature, we notice that a lot of suffering seems to come out of nowhere. We don't know what we did wrong to deserve all the punishment we seem to get.

As described in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* (*Madhya* 20.102), Sanātana Gosvāmī's first questions to Caitanya Mahāprabhu were "Who am I, and why am I suffering?"

An elaboration on the second question might be "Have I brought the suffering upon myself?"

Sanātana had preceded his questions by saying, "I do not know what is beneficial for me or what is detrimental." Like the amnesiac, our first business should be to understand who we are; otherwise, we can't know what's good for us. The besieged amnesiac has to find out who he is and what he has done to create enemies. Otherwise, his actions might bring on new enemies, and even more suffering.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu revealed Sanātana Gosvāmī's identity to him by telling him that every living being is an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa and part of Kṛṣṇa's *taṭastha śakti,* or "marginal energy." And Caitanya Mahāprabhu revealed the source of Sanātana's suffering: "Forgetting Kṛṣṇa, the living entity has been attracted by the external feature from time immemorial. Therefore the illusory energy [*māyā*] gives him all kinds of misery in his material existence." (*Cc. Madhya* 20.117)

We suffer because we're spiritual beings in a material world. When we reject God and rebel against our natural position as His servants, *māyā* deludes us into thinking we are the bodies we inhabit. In fact, our body (and mind—a subtle energy, but not spiritual) is a vehicle to deliver suffering, most prominently old age, disease, and death. If we continue in the illusion that we are our bodies, the Vedic scriptures teach us, we'll repeatedly get another body after death, and our suffering will never end.

Buddha realized that suffering is eternal and life should be dedicated to breaking free of it. His solution was to dissolve the self, to cease to exist. The Māyāvāda solution to become one with everything is a similar prescription because it means the loss of one's individuality.

According to Caitanya Mahāprabhu, each of us is an eternal spiritual person and our eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa defines our identity. For the self-realized soul, self-annihilation would mean the unthinkable—the end of that relationship. The solution to our woes lies not in spiritual suicide but in recovering our memory. By remembering who we are, we can live happily in eternal loving exchanges with God.

—*Nāgarāja Dāsa*

Śrīla Prabhupāda

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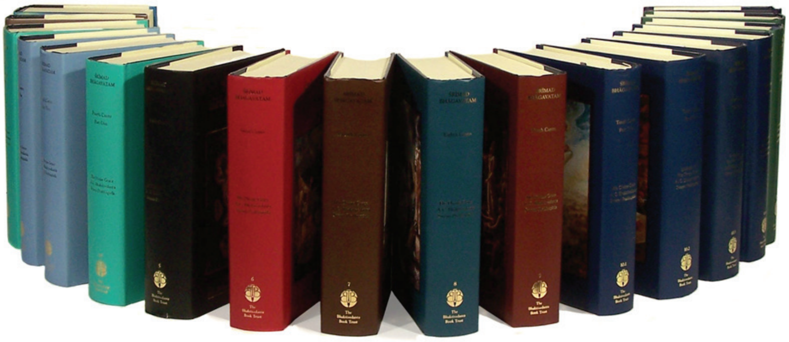

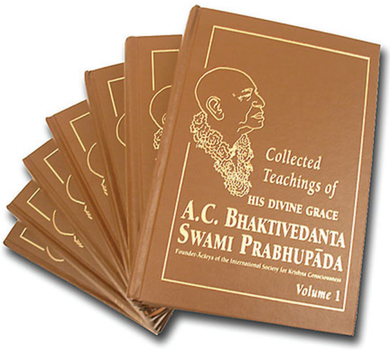
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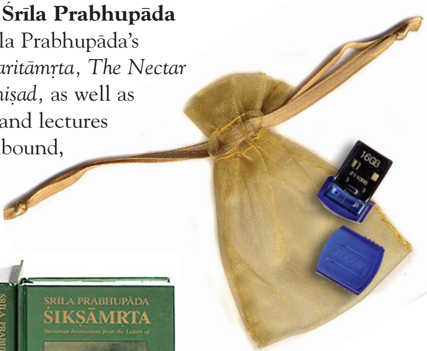

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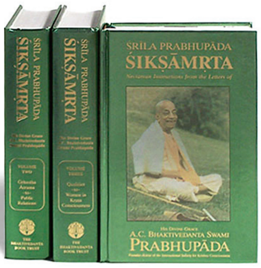
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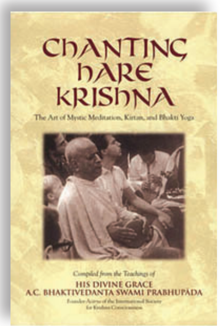
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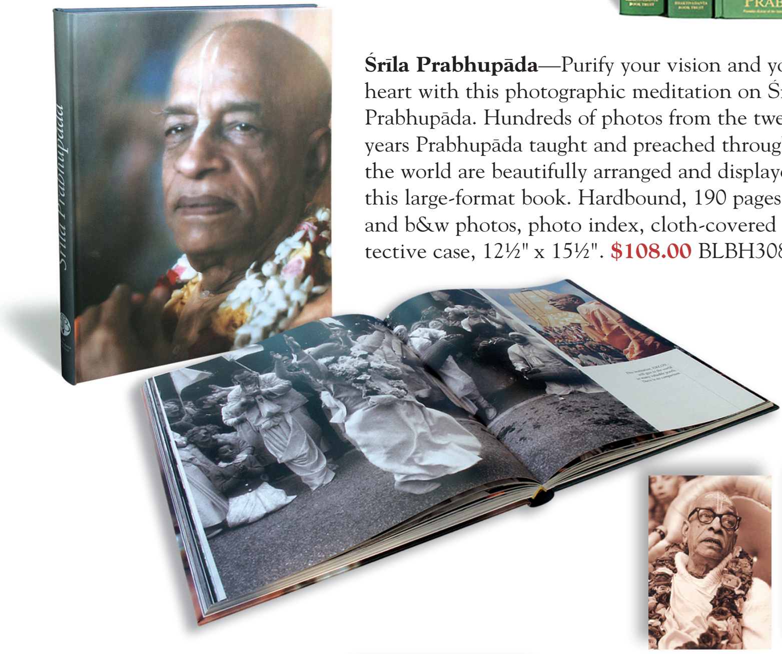
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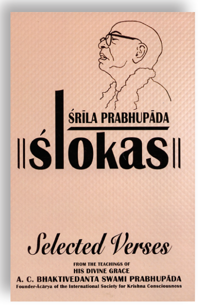
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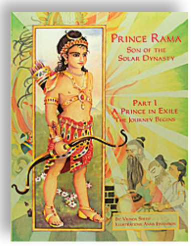
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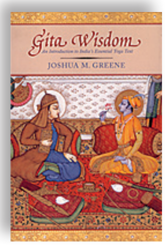
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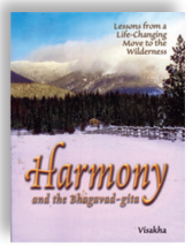
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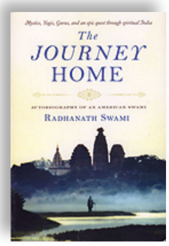
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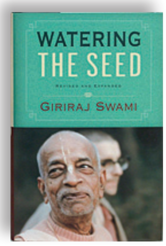
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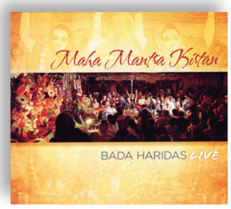
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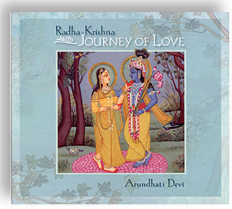
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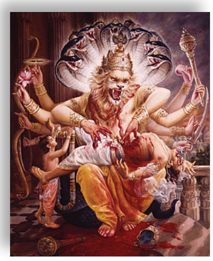

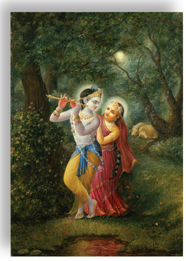

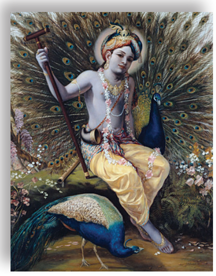

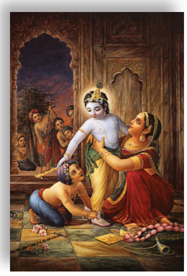

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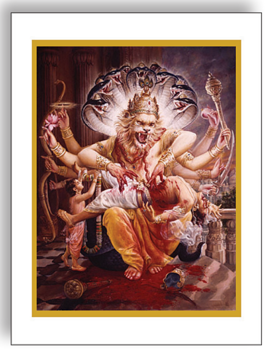

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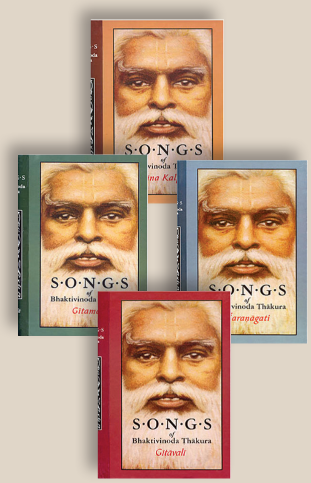

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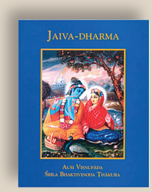

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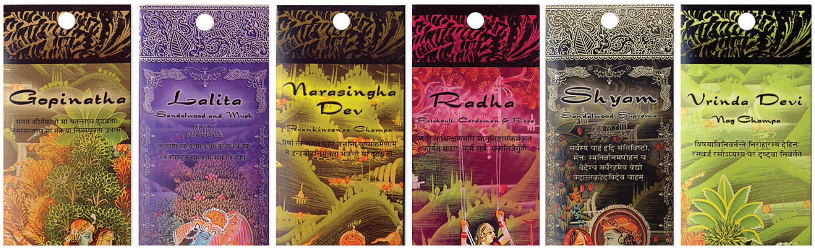

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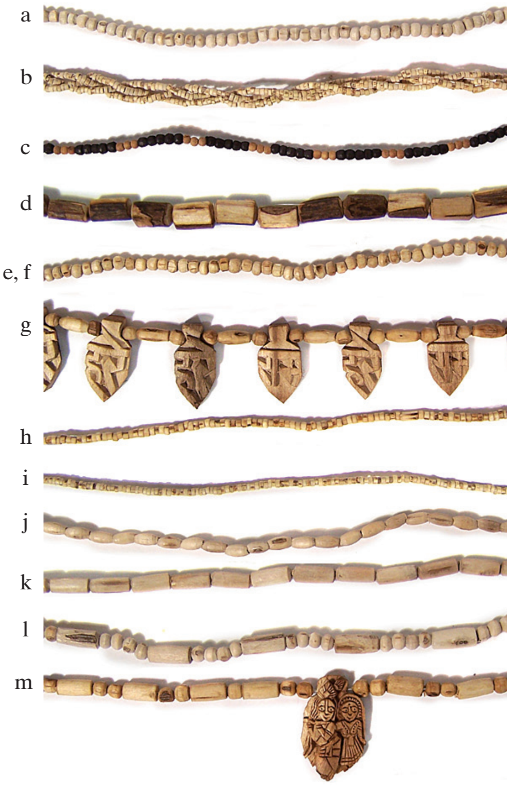

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VEDIC THOUGHTS

Those who are artists, overtaken by the beautiful creation, should better see to the beautiful face of the Lord for complete satisfaction. The face of the Lord is the embodiment of beauty. What they call beautiful nature is but His smile, and what they call the sweet songs of the birds are but specimens of the whispering voice of the Lord.

His Divine Grace
A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.11.26, Purport

One who properly hears Vedic knowledge does not have to return to the cycle of birth and death.

Vedanta-sūtra 4.4.23

O unconquerable Lord, although You cannot be conquered by anyone, You are certainly conquered by devotees who have control of the mind and senses. They can keep You under their control because You are causelessly merciful to devotees who desire no material profit from You. Indeed, You give Yourself to them, and because of this You also have full control over Your devotees.

King Citraketu
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.16.34

Material enjoyments are full of poison, but you consider them pleasing. Do not think of them as a source of happiness, but understand them as distress. Be absorbed in full thought of Govinda, associate with His devotees, and conclude that loving devotional service is the goal of life.

Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura
Śrī Prema Bhakti Candrikā 7.4

The highest devotion is attained by slow degrees by the method of constant endeavor for self-realization with the help of scriptural evidence, theistic conduct, and perseverance in practice.

Lord Brahmā
Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā 5.59

The holy name is never revealed to one in the bodily conception of life, who thinks in terms of "I" and "mine." Without giving up the enjoying mentality, the transcendental platform can never be attained.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura
Prākṛta-rasa-śata-dūṣiṇī 4

If through meticulous study one becomes expert in reading Vedic literature but makes no endeavor to fix one's mind on the Supreme Personality of Godhead, then one's endeavor is certainly like that of a man who works very hard to take care of a cow that gives no milk. In other words, the fruit of one's laborious study of Vedic knowledge will simply be the labor itself. There will be no other tangible result.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.11.18

2011 Philadelphia Rathayātrā

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May 4: Baltimore, University of Maryland Festival
May 5: Sandy Ridge, N.C., Appearance Day of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva Festival
May 12–13: New Orleans Rathayātrā
May 19: Jacksonville Rathayātrā
May 26–27: Baltimore Rathayātrā
June 2–3: Atlanta Pāṇihāṭi Festival & Rathayātrā
June 9: New York City Rathayātrā
June 24: Chicago Rathayātrā
July 4: Washington, D.C., Rathayātrā
July 7–8: Montreal Rathayātrā
July 14–15: Toronto Rathayātrā
July 17: Thunder Bay, Ontario, Rathayātrā
July 21: Calgary Rathayātrā
July 22: San Francisco Rathayātrā
July 28: Edmonton Rathayātrā
July 31–August 1: Las Vegas Harināma Saṅkīrtana & Book Distribution on the Strip
August 5: Los Angeles Rathayātrā
August 9–10: Vancouver Janmāṣṭamī & Vyāsa Pūjā
August 18–19: Vancouver Rathayātrā
September 1–3: Seattle Rathayātrā
September 15–16: Boston Rathayātrā
September 22: Philadelphia Rathayātrā
October 20: Potomac, Md., Śrī Rāmacandra Vijayotsava Festival

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IMPORTANT NOTE: Some of these dates are not yet confirmed. Before scheduling your travel, be sure to confirm the festival date with the ISKCON temple in the city where the festival is to be held. Or email Festival of India: madhuhadasa@gmail.com